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Version: Version of Record

Link(s) to article on publisher's website:

<http://dx.doi.org/doi:10.21954/ou.ro.0000ea50>

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PUBLIC SPACES AND DISCURSIVE PRACTICES IN  
COLONIAL DELHI 1860-1915

Thesis submitted for PhD

Geography Department

Faculty of Social Sciences

The Open University

Submitted September 2008

*Date of award: 12 December 2008*

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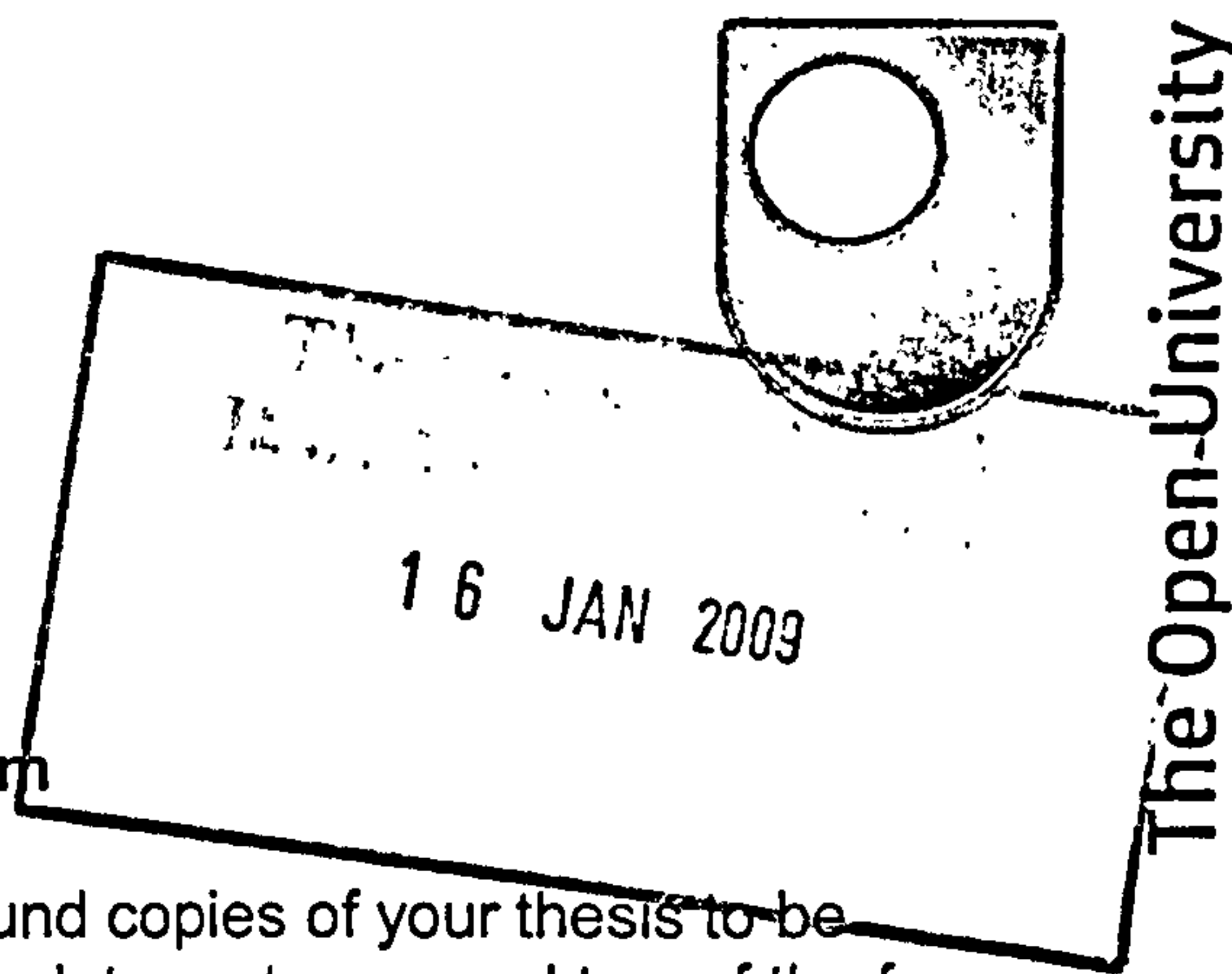
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## Abstract

In this thesis I explore why public spaces were important for the colonial state and for Indians in Delhi and I examine how the various inhabitants of the city discursively constructed these spaces and participated in them in order to fulfil specific cultural and political objectives. I look closely at encounters between the British and the Indians in public spaces in the context of religious processions in the late nineteenth century and in the context of political activities and the growth of print culture in the early twentieth century in order to show how public spaces were constructed by multiple and complex discourses and discursive practices. I analyse how the colonial state defined its roles in the public spaces of Delhi in response to the evolving cultural and political ambitions of the Indians and I explore how the Indians, not only contributed to the formation of the colonial state, but also how they mobilised a range of resources and strategies and positioned themselves in a number of discursive networks in order to construct and participate in colonial public spaces. My aim is to uncover the different considerations and priorities that informed the encounters between the British and the Indians and which were defined by diverse dynamics such as conflict, resistance, negotiation, and dialogue. This thesis contributes to colonial urban studies and postcolonial geographies by analysing the construction of public spaces and the connections between them as a series of processes in which the British *and* the Indians participated, through a range of entangled practices which were informed by local, national, and global discourses, exchanges, and events.



## Acknowledgements

I must begin by thanking Roderick Neumann and Gail Hollander who were my supervisors during my first graduate degree. They pointed me in the direction of a Geography PhD at the Open University, commented extensively on the drafts of my research proposal, and took an extra-special interest in my professional development. I am greatly indebted to them and would not be here without their care and attention. In Delhi, I would like to thank Narayani Gupta for her advice about archival sources and Mrs Bhasin at the Delhi State Archives for her kindness and help. A special thanks to Jasbir *mamiji*, Davinder *mamaji* and the whole family for looking after me so well during my stay in Delhi. At the Open University I am extremely grateful to the Research School and the Geography Department for the excellent support and resources without which my research would not have been possible. Thank you to my supervisors, Clive Barnett and Sandip Hazareesingh for their expert and enthusiastic guidance; I am especially grateful to Clive for his understanding and encouragement when I needed it most. Lastly, thank you to Annalisa, Praveen, Binny, Shalini, Munro, Ronnie, Winnie, Dad and Mum for their myriad forms of love and support.

## Archival sources

D.S.A.	Delhi State Archives, New Delhi
D.C.	Deputy Commissioner's Files
H.C.	Home Confidential Files
I.O.R.L.	India Office Records and Library at the British Library, London
N.M.M.L.	Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi

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# **Chapter One: Colonial studies and public spaces in Delhi**

## **1.1 Introduction**

In this thesis I examine the diverse and complex encounters in public spaces between the colonial state and Indians in Delhi. Firstly, I look at the encounters that took place over access to the physical public spaces of the city, such as the streets and the city centre, in the context of religious processions. Secondly, I analyse the competing claims to public spaces of discourse such as newspapers, pamphlets and public meetings in the context of nationalist and other political activities. I look at how the colonial state defined its roles in the public spaces of Delhi in response to the evolving cultural and political ambitions and practices of the Indians. My aim is to emphasise the complexity of colonial relations and public spaces by showing that the Indians and the British engaged with each other in different ways in the process of constructing and participating in these spaces. At certain times those encounters were defined by the dynamics of conflict and resistance; however, at other times, they were denoted by processes of negotiation and dialogue. At all times, the British and Indians were entangled in the production of public spaces through a range of relationships and a series of discursive processes. Following are the research questions that guided the process of my research and that I respond to throughout this thesis:

- Why were public spaces so important in colonial Delhi?
- How did the British and the Indians construct and participate in public spaces in colonial Delhi?



- What difference does it make to analyse the discursive construction of public spaces as a series of processes in which the British *and* the Indians participated?

In this introductory chapter I begin by explaining how I use the discursive approach to study public spaces in colonial Delhi and I provide a summary of Chapters Two and Three, which describe the theoretical and methodological factors that informed my approach. In the latter section of this chapter I provide a background of colonial Delhi with an emphasis on the public spaces that I looked at and I briefly describe how I have structured Chapters Four to Seven in order to analyse the production of those spaces.

## **1.2 The discursive approach to colonial studies**

The field of colonial studies has opened up considerably since the 1980s because of Marxist, feminist and postcolonial analyses that pioneered investigations into the political nature of imperial projects and of the colonial production of knowledge. They revealed how colonial states produced meanings and the identities of colonising and colonised peoples through discourse and other practices. These studies have been followed by more nuanced analyses of colonized peoples 'whose histories were made up of more than the fact that they were colonized' (Stoler and Cooper, 1997:18), though much more needs to be done in this area of colonial history. Moreover, it is important to bring these investigations together in order to emphasise that 'political possibilities do not just lie in grand oppositions but in the interstices of power structures, in the intersection of particular agendas, in the political spaces opened by new and renewed discourses and by subtle shifts in ideological ground' (ibid). There is still a substantial amount of work to do that recognizes colonialism for the complex amalgam of practices and relationships that it was.

Colonial societies were rich assemblages of diverse and complex people, discourses and materials that forced European ideologies and practices to fracture, adapt and transform when they came into contact with these societies. It is no longer possible to study colonialism simply as a set of practices or concepts directed by the metropolitan centre and implemented in the colonies. Colonial administrators in the colonies and colonised peoples often subverted directives that came from the metropolitan centres and worked the administrations for their own purposes. Moreover, people and discourses in colonial spaces were informed by events taking place in other so-called 'peripheral' spaces. Networks of communication and knowledge were made between diverse colonial spaces and were not just shaped by the metropole-colony axis. It is necessary to move beyond the bipolar model of core and periphery and to replace this with approaches that emphasise a multilateral series of practices and relationships between different colonial spaces and different colonial peoples (Cook, 1993: 12).

It is crucial to look carefully at various colonial projects and, where possible, analyse the diverse priorities and contributions of colonised peoples. This means looking at the multiple ways that colonised peoples engaged with the colonial state. Anti-colonial and oppositional discourses and practices of resistance were not the only ways that Indians interacted with the British. There were, as I show in this thesis, Indians who asserted their colonial citizenship while engaging with state ideologies and practices. Colonized elites became adept at working within and manipulating the state in order to achieve their ends and they opened up all sorts of political spaces in the process. It is possible to look at cultural and political movements at all levels of colonial society, from local religious activities to international networks of communication and support, which secured the attention and involvement of the colonial state and shaped its roles in different ways (Cooper, 2005a: 411, 2005b).



The discursive approach to understanding colonial relations has been and remains very relevant to the field of colonial studies. The discursive approach uses discourse analysis as a way to understand how colonial spaces, relations and identities were constructed (Wetherell, Taylor and Yates, 2001; Carabine, 2001). By discourses I mean words and language that, when spoken, written, and circulated, performed specific actions and had material consequences, such as the construction of identities and spaces in colonial Delhi. Discourses are not representations or metaphors; they are materials in that they have very tangible effects and consequences and these discourses connected with other practices in order to shape colonial identities and spaces. When I talk about discursive practices, I mean the action of constructing or producing things through discourse. However, I also draw attention to the constructive properties of spatial practices. When the British and Indians participated in and occupied public spaces through a range of spatial practices, these actions had productive effects in that they constructed these spaces and the identities of people within them. Therefore, while my emphasis is on the discursive production of public spaces, I also recognise the productive effects of the other practices that the British and the Indians engaged in because, as I stated above, discourses always connected with other practices to produce colonial spaces and identities.

In Chapter Two, I discuss the different concepts that informed my discursive approach to examining public spaces in colonial Delhi. I begin by briefly reviewing the key contributions of postcolonial theories, with an emphasis on the use of discourse analysis to explain how the colonisers constructed colonial subjects and spaces. This model of analysis was pioneering in colonial studies and it has been indispensable to my own theoretical and methodological approaches (Said, 1993, 1978; Foucault, 1977). I describe the shortcomings of early postcolonial theories and discuss how they have

evolved to provoke more questions about colonial discourses, to recognise the fragmentary nature of colonial power and to offer ways forward to engage with and theorise the discourses and agency of colonised peoples (Bhabha, 1994, 1991; Spivak, 1994). My theoretical approach has also been informed by some exemplary empirical studies focused on colonial India which examined how the British constructed and institutionalised the cultural identities of Indians (Dirks, 2001; Metcalf, 1994) and also how Indians constructed their own cultural understandings using diverse strategies and discursive practices (Chatterjee, 1993, 1986).

In the latter half of Chapter Two, I explain how I apply my discursive approach, which has been informed by the concepts of postcolonial theory and examples from empirical research, specifically to the analysis of public spaces in colonial Delhi. I briefly review urban studies that have analysed the construction of public city spaces and their significance for their inhabitants (Hosagrahar, 2005; Watson, 2005; Yeoh 1996, 1991) and I discuss how they have informed my own approaches to public spaces in colonial Delhi. In addition to examining the significance of physical urban spaces in the context of religious processions, I also discuss the importance of public spheres or what I call public spaces of discourse such as newspapers, pamphlets and public meetings for the colonial state and for the Indian elite. I explain how existing theories of the public sphere can be expanded and adapted by infusing it with the concepts of postcolonial discourse analysis in order to appreciate the heterogeneous and multiple public spheres of colonial Delhi, which were discursively constructed by the colonial state and the Indians. Finally, in this chapter, I discuss why it is important to analyse how colonised peoples made connections between colonial spaces through the movement and exchange of people, discourses and printed materials (Ogborn 2007, 2002, 2000; Lester, 2003, 2001). I have studied the significance of print culture to the creation of Indian public spheres and I have shown how Indian elites in Delhi constructed links between local,

national and global spaces through a number of exchanges. Analysing how the Indians constructed public spaces and connections between them is crucial to opening up the study of colonial spaces and conceiving them as heterogeneous, porous, mobile and dynamic sites that were crucial for British rule and for the cultural and political aspirations of the Indians.

In order to examine the discursive construction of public spaces in colonial Delhi, I worked primarily with colonial archives in Delhi and, to a lesser extent, in London. In Chapter Three, I begin by discussing the significance of colonial archives both as spaces of power and as sites of interpretation for colonial researchers. Postcolonial theorists have shown us how colonial discourses, which were produced and stored in archives, constructed the subjectivities and spaces of the colonised. Indeed, by reading the archival records carefully and paying attention to both the content and the form of the records, it is possible to analyse and question the processes by which the colonial state was formed. I discuss how I read the colonial records both along and against the grain in order to examine the complex roles played by the colonisers and the colonised. The substantial part of Chapter Three describes how I looked for and collected my data in Delhi and in London, and how I interpreted it. I relate my experiences of extracting evidence from the archives to theoretical and methodological issues of partiality and selection. Finally, in Chapter Three, I describe how I analysed the data using a model of discourse analysis inspired by Foucault's (1978, 1977, 1972) concepts of discourse and genealogy. In the following section I explain why I have chosen to study public spaces in colonial Delhi and I describe how I have structured Chapters Four, Five, Six and Seven in order to analyse the production of these spaces.

## **1.2 Public spaces in colonial Delhi**



Some of the most thoughtful and provocative studies on colonial India have focused on Calcutta and Bengal by noted scholars such as Partha Chatterjee (2004, 1993, 1986, 1984), Gauri Viswanathan (1998, 1989), Gyan Prakash (1995), Gayatri Spivak (1994, 1985), Chandra Mohanty (1991), and Ranajit Guha (1982). The studies by these scholars have explored several aspects of colonised societies in Bengal including peasant movements, subaltern women and intellectual contributions by the elite. Calcutta was the capital of British India for over one hundred and fifty years before Delhi was conferred with the role in 1911. Delhi has primarily been of interest to researchers interested in analysing the substantial and elaborate transformation of its physical spaces after 1857. These include works by Stephen Legg (2007, 2003), Jyoti Hosagrahar (2005), Indra Kumar Khanna (1986), Narayani Gupta (1981), Robert Irving (1981), Anthony King (1976), and Patrick Geddes (1915). With the exception of Hosagrahar and Gupta, there has been little analysis of the complex colonial society that existed in Delhi and of the relationship between the British and the Indians in the public spaces of the city. Two studies by K. Lal (1999) and Sangat Singh (1972) have documented the rise of nationalist political activity in Delhi from the end of the nineteenth century; however, while these studies are rich in detail, they do not explore the rise of public spheres as a product of the encounters between the British and the Indians, nor do they examine the significance of their diverse discursive strategies and spatial practices. There is a tremendous opportunity to make inquiries into the cultural and political practices that defined public spaces in nineteenth century and early twentieth century colonial Delhi.

I have read several accounts of Delhi in which I have come across consistent mention of a complex urban landscape of public space activities and public discourse that was inherited from the Mughal era and which persisted and evolved during the British

occupation. When the British took over Delhi from the Mughals in the early nineteenth century it comprised primarily the city of Shahjahanabad which had been created by the emperor Shah Jahan in the eighteenth century (Gupta, *ibid*; Singh, *ibid*; Nigam, 1957; Andrews, 1929; Hearn, 1906). In 1857 the Revolt took place in which the city of Delhi was held by rebel soldiers from Meerut for four months until the British reoccupied it (Chandra, 1969: 25). On February 6<sup>th</sup> 1858 Delhi was transferred from the jurisdiction of the North-West Provinces (present day Uttar Pradesh) to become a district of the Punjab province. In the same year, on November 1, 1858, the responsibility for running the government of the country was transferred from the East India Company to the British Crown under a Viceroy and Calcutta became the capital of British India. When the British occupied Delhi, between 1858 and 1862 a large number of houses and buildings were demolished in order to construct a military cantonment and railway lines. There was a sharp drop in the population during these years and it was only after 1862 that the population began to increase again. The Delhi Municipality was established in 1863 and a spate of public construction followed which included a college, schools, museum, railroad station, roads, bridges, hotels and gardens (Hosagrahar, 2005: 39). By the mid 1860s there was a large British population at Delhi; however, they did not live within the walled city, they lived in the newly constructed civil lines outside the city. The construction of the East India railway through Delhi was completed during the mid 1860s and Delhi rebounded once more as a centre of trade and commerce (Gupta, *ibid*; Nigam, *ibid*).

Outdoor public life was a prominent feature in the city. Delhi, like most Indian cities, had many *chowks* which were large open spaces or ‘lungs’ of the city situated at the junction of two major roads; they were focal points and meeting spaces for the city’s inhabitants (Dayal, 1975). Chandni Chowk was the largest and most frequented of the *chowks* and it was also an important commercial centre and the site of a Hindu temple



and the Jama Masjid mosque. Private trade, public business and public worship were concentrated here. It functioned as the heart of the city and was the main processional space through which all religious processions insisted on passing. The British held two

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DISTRICT

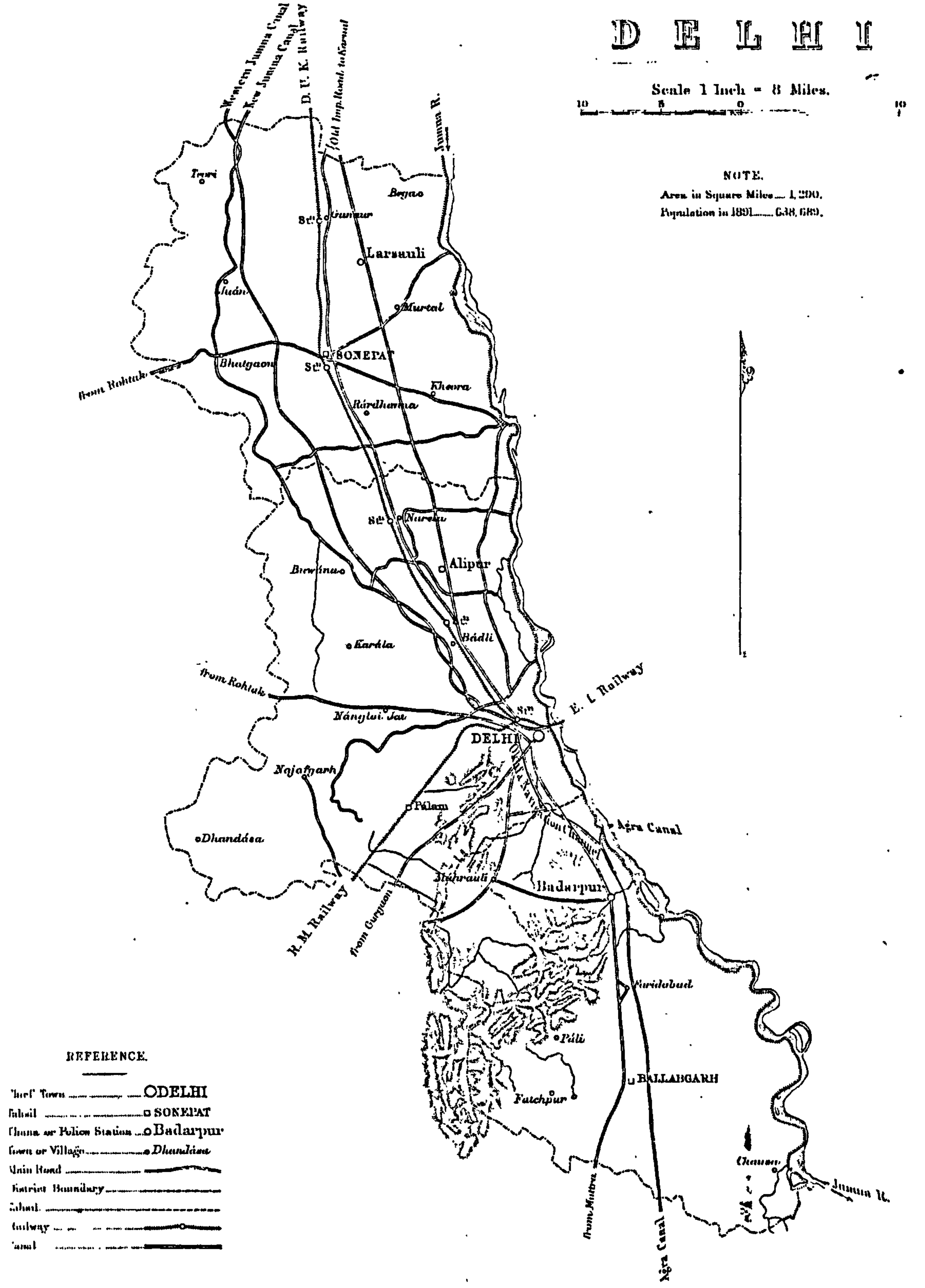
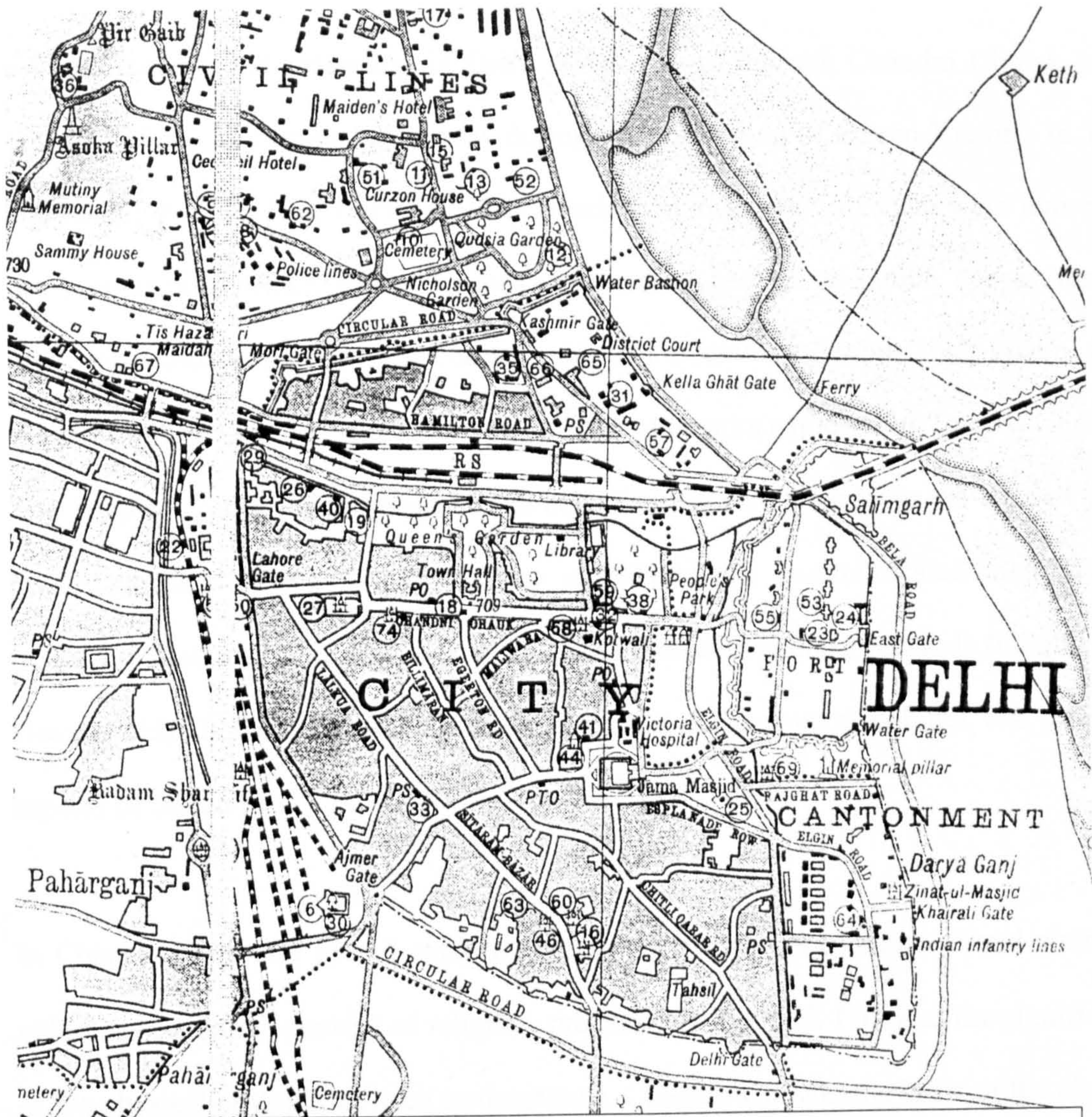


Figure 1.1 The District of Delhi, from Delhi District 1898, box 79, Indian Survey Maps, I.O.R.L.





Map References	
6 Arabic College	40 Imperial Hotel
8 Battery Position 1857	41 Indraprastha Hindu Girl's College
11 Battery Position 1857	44 Jain Temple
12 Battery Position 1857	46 Masjid
13 Battery Position 1857	51 Ludlow Castle
15 Chief Commissioner's Office	52 Masonic Club
16 Chitij Qabar	53 Moti Masjid
17 Civil & Military Hotel	55 Nakkar Khana
18 Clock Tower	57 Post & Telegraph Office General
19 Cloth Market	58 Rajon ki Baoli
22 Delhi Sadr Railway Station	59 Rama Theatre
23 Diwan-i-am	60 Grave of Raziya Begum
24 Diwan-i-Khas	62 Sessions Court
25 Edward Park	63 Grave of Shah Turkeman
26 Empire Cinema	64 Sharaf Eye Hospital
27 Fatehpuri Masjid	65 St. James Church
29 Gen. Nicholson Spot	66 St. Stephen's College
31 Government High School	67 St. Stephen's Hospital (females)
32 Gurudwara	69 Sunahri Masjid
33 Hauz Qazi	74 Masjid
38 Imperial Bank	

**Figure 1.2 City of Delhi**, adapted from Tourist Map of Delhi 1927, Box 79, Indian Survey Maps, I.O.R.L.



*darbars* (ceremonial gathering) in Delhi which passed through Chandni Chowk (spelt Chandni Chauk in Figure 1.2 above), during the coronation of Queen Victoria in 1877 and King Edward VII in 1903 (ibid, 20). In addition to the *chowks* there were numerous open-air bazaars which were as much commercial centres as public spaces for the production and circulation of social and political discourses (Gupta, ibid; Hearn, ibid; Pershad, 1921). Outdoor spaces such as gardens and parks namely The Queens Gardens, The People's Park, The Company Bagh and King Edward Park were the sites of large public meetings where Delhi's citizens articulated and communicated their diverse political ambitions and agendas from the late nineteenth century onwards (Gupta, ibid; Hearn, ibid). Public spaces were therefore crucial for several cultural and political aspects of Indian life.

In Chapters Four and Five I explore Indian and British conceptions of and claims to public spaces in the context of religious processions in Delhi. I look at the significance of the physical city spaces, such as the streets, Chandni Chowk (the heart of the city and the main processional space), and the urban landscape as a whole, for the cultural and political ambitions of the British and the Indians. In Chapter Four I examine the campaign by a minority Jain sect known as the Saraogis to gain permission for an annual religious procession, also known as a *rathjatra*, which had been banned by the British Commissioner of Delhi because he claimed that opposition by Hindu groups to the Saraogi processions made them a threat to public order. I look at a series of letters and petitions from the Saraogis and the responses by various colonial administrators in order to examine the discourses and the discursive strategies employed by the Saraogis to lay claim to Delhi's public spaces and by the British to deny them that access and make their own claims to the city spaces.

I trace the changes and development in the Saraogis' campaign over a period of almost fifteen years in order to examine how their arguments and discursive strategies evolved over time into a convincing set of narratives about equal rights and religious tolerance. My principal aim in Chapter Four is to show how crucial public spaces were for the religious, communal and political identities of the Indians or, rather, how cultural and political ambitions and desires were manifested in claims to public spaces. I show that Indians defined and participated in public spaces and influenced and transformed government practices in the process; they were always engaged participants rather than passive recipients. Moreover, I show that interactions between the colonial state and Indians were not only defined by the dynamics of conflict and resistance; they were often denoted by processes of dialogue and negotiation with Indian colonial elites claiming entitlements under colonial laws in order to articulate their cultural and political ambitions.

In Chapter Five, I focus on the actual procession or *rathjatra* and I explore the combination of discursive, spatial, and temporal practices employed by the Saraogis to participate in and appropriate Delhi's public spaces. The Saraogis sought to make a significant and lasting impact upon the city and its people by designing a lengthy and elaborate procession. I analyse the importance of the spatial and temporal strategies for the Saraogis as well as for the other Indians and the state. I describe the comprehensive policing programme constructed by the government in order to manage the procession and I examine the principal concerns for the state, which were the more technical aspects of governmentality such as discipline and control; however, I argue that, at least in the case of the first procession, the state was also motivated by other concerns such as fairness to the other Indian groups, protection for the Saraogis and general public convenience. I show that the priorities of the state adapted to the changing local political contexts.

In the latter part of Chapter Five, I describe the proposals put forward by the Saraogis to hold more *rathjattras* in addition to the annual *rathjatra*. I examine the significance of these initiatives by the Saraogis in an atmosphere of increased tensions with the Hindus and in the context of their increasing desire to make an impact in Delhi's public spaces and public life. I make nuanced considerations of the colonial state's priorities in order to show that it responded to changing local circumstances and constantly contended with informed, influential and engaged Indians, rather than privileging the analysis of spatial ordering and technologies of discipline. My aim is to show, in Chapters Four and Five, that colonial urban spaces were brought alive by the British and the Indians in different ways and were constantly being defined by often complex cultural and political claims. Customary cultural practices and local political rivalries constantly influenced the ways that the colonial state shaped its role in Delhi's public spaces.

Another aspect of public life that I explore is the public spheres or what I refer to as public spaces of discourse in Delhi. By this I mean spaces such as newspapers, pamphlets and public meetings where people organised themselves or came together through discourse in order to further specific cultural and political ends. Historically, elite public spaces of discourse took on several different forms in Delhi. In the nineteenth century, there was The Delhi College and a Vernacular Society whose chief purpose was to translate mostly Greek and Persian classics into Urdu. The Delhi College was closed by the British in 1877 and opposition to its closure was vociferous particularly among Muslim scholars who interpreted the closure of the college as a threat to the importance of Urdu as the main language of instruction. In 1877, British missionaries established the Cambridge Mission in Delhi which opened St Stephens College in 1882 in order to replace the Delhi College (Gupta, *ibid*; Pershad, *ibid*). There was also the Delhi Society, many of whose members were alumni of The Delhi College.



The Delhi Society met frequently in the 1860s and produced several publications in Urdu, many of which were translated into English. It was the Indians from these bourgeois institutions that galvanised Delhi's elite into groups which sought political representation and organised opposition to specific acts of the Delhi Municipality, such as taxation (Gupta, *ibid*; Dayal, *ibid*; Chandra, *ibid*). Several of these people then became involved in nationalist activities which grew steadily following the formation of the Indian National Congress in 1885. In the early twentieth century the Government of India proposed the partition of Bengal and opposition to this partition was vociferous in towns and cities all over the country, including Delhi. Print media such as newspapers and pamphlets became important public spaces of discourse that, through their circulation and consumption, created more political public spaces and links between local, national and global spaces.

In Chapter Six I examine the significance of public spaces of discourse such as newspapers, pamphlets and public meetings for the colonial state and for the Indians in the context of rising nationalist activities. The growth of a nationalist consciousness and its manifestations in various public media following the formation of the Indian National Congress was a concern for the colonial state. I describe the series of measures developed by the colonial state, at the national level, to regulate the growth of Indian public spaces of discourse. I examine the state's escalating campaign to sensationalise the effects of Indian political discourses in order to justify its interventions against their production and circulation. I explain how the state crafted or discursively constructed itself as interpreter in Indian public spheres in order to disrupt initiatives by Indians to articulate and communicate their political thoughts and ambitions in public spaces and especially through the print media.

In the latter part of Chapter Six I focus on Delhi and, in particular, on the efforts by a group of Delhi's citizens to create public spaces of discourse in the context of growing political fervour and the state's campaign of control and censorship. I describe how Indians in Delhi became involved in national networks of activity in response to the *Swadeshi* movement and the partition of Bengal and how they negotiated and thwarted the state's multiple attempts at censorship and control. I show how crucial public spaces, from print media like newspapers and pamphlets to public meetings and demonstrations, were to the political ambitions of the Indians. Print media were not only spaces of discourse but they were also materials that created links between activists in Delhi and Calcutta and exiled Indian activists in England, California and Delhi by circulating between them. The main aim of Chapter Six is to show that public spaces, of which printed mediums were an integral part, were crucial for the evolving political aspirations of the British and the Indians and that they assumed an especially heightened urgency in the context of a changing political climate. Examining the methods by which the state and Indian political activists defined and appropriated the various spaces of discourse offers an excellent opportunity to understand the complexity of public political life in India and Delhi and to recognise the contributions of people from different parts of colonial society to the construction of public spheres.

The crucial relevance of public spheres and print media only increased for the Indians and the British as the twentieth century progressed. The capital of British India was shifted to Delhi in 1911. Delhi was separated from the Punjab and it was organised into a 'Province of Delhi' headed by a Commissioner (Gupta, *ibid*). Shortly after, Britain found itself on the brink of the First World War against Germany with the likelihood of Turkey entering the War on Germany's side. This possibility of British attacks against Turkey, a Muslim nation, was a serious concern for many Indian Muslims. In Chapter



Seven, I focus on Indian public opinion, with an emphasis on Muslim public opinion, in the context of the early years of the First World War.

I focus on the efforts of a Muslim journalist and influential political figure in Delhi, Mohamed Ali, to construct public spaces of discourse by establishing two newspapers in Delhi, one in Urdu and one in English. I concentrate my analysis on his English language newspaper, the *Comrade*, in order to examine how he used this public space for several different purposes. He used it as a medium of communication with the colonial state and as a way to establish and promote Pan-Islamic networks of concern and support for his Muslim brethren all over the world. He was also, however, in favour of cooperation with Hindus and he supported Indian nationalism. The *Comrade* was, therefore, a complex public space that Ali used to negotiate his complex identity as a concerned and progressive Muslim who was also an Indian and a British subject.

The Delhi government was especially concerned with Mohamed Ali's efforts to use his newspapers to promote Pan-Islamism and to create links between Muslims in national and international spaces. During the First World War, the British state was intent on ensuring that Indian public opinion was in support of the British war effort and Ali's attempts to engage in thoughtful critiques and promote support for Muslims and Turkey in his newspapers were interpreted as dangerous. My aim in Chapter Seven is to show how public spaces like newspapers were used by Indian elites in order to fulfil diverse cultural and political desires. These included efforts to promote specific agendas, to make thoughtful observations on local and global issues and to engage the colonial state in complex and sometimes provocative ways. The state, however, was intent on interpreting these activities as hostile and it created and perpetuated specific identity assumptions and stereotypes of Muslims and Hindus in its attempts to halt the growth of critical Indian public spheres.

In the concluding chapter I summarise the key arguments and analyses that I have made and I discuss the findings in response to my research questions. In the following chapter I describe how I used the concepts of postcolonial theories and examples from empirical research in order to analyse the relevance and construction of colonial public spaces in Delhi.

## **Chapter Two: Postcolonial theories, colonial studies and public spaces**

### **2.1 Introduction**

In my analyses of colonial Delhi, I study the discursive practices through which the colonisers and the colonised constructed public spaces and I examine how they conducted their relations and created their identities within those spaces. Public spaces were crucial sites for the political ambitions of the colonial state as much as for the cultural and political desires of the Indians. The colonial state and the Indians imagined and occupied these public spaces differently and their differences were played out through complex processes defined by conflict, negotiation and dialogue. In this chapter I explain how my approaches to understanding the construction of colonial spaces in Delhi has been influenced by postcolonial theories, empirical colonial studies and especially by colonial geographers and urban researchers who have looked at the construction of colonial spaces and identities in different ways. I engage critically with postcolonial theories and existing empirical research in order to, not only highlight the value of their contributions but also to explain how they have been inadequate for understanding the complexity of colonial socio-spatial relations.

Postcolonial theory began by exploring how European colonisers constructed the subjectivities, identities, and spaces of colonised peoples through discourse but it has since evolved to encourage more nuanced considerations of the fragmentary nature of colonial power and thoughtful discussions about the agency of colonised peoples (Loomba et al., 2005; Young, 2001, 1990; Loomba, 1998; Prakash, 1995; Chrisman and Williams, 1994). Postcolonial theory has influenced how researchers understand colonial spaces by emphasising how these spaces were constituted by discursive practices, performed by the colonised as well as the colonisers. Empirical researchers

and especially geographers have, in turn, invigorated colonial studies by carrying out detailed studies about the construction of public spaces and by studying various forms of connections between local and global colonial spaces. There is still, however, an enormous amount of work to do on the multiple and complex ways that the British and the Indians constructed their public spaces and negotiated their differences within them in ways that do not prioritise the operation of colonial power at the expense of more nuanced considerations of colonial relations.

I begin this chapter by reviewing early postcolonial theories with an emphasis on the work of Edward Said who pioneered research on the discursive construction of colonial spaces and colonised subjects. I discuss how Michel Foucault's theories of discourse and power were developed by Said and how they have informed postcolonial analysis. I emphasise the crucial contributions of these theories to my research but I also discuss how I have departed from them in the process of analysing how the British and the Indians constructed public spaces in Delhi. I then discuss how postcolonial theory has evolved, following the contributions of Homi Bhabha, who showed us that colonial discourses were complex and vulnerable and Gayatri Spivak, who urged us to exercise caution when recovering the agency of colonised people. These postcolonial scholars have encouraged more nuanced considerations of the operation of colonial discourses and power and have offered more helpful ways to theorise the agency of colonised peoples. In Section 2.3 I review a selection of empirical studies that have been very influential in the field of colonial studies with their practical analyses of the operation of governmental practices and the cultural and political strategies of the Indians. Following this, I describe how I have incorporated the key concepts of postcolonial theories and existing empirical research into my approach to studying the construction of public spaces in colonial Delhi. I review a selection of urban studies that have shown how colonised peoples participated in the creation of public spaces and I also examine



the research of colonial geographers that has studied connections between colonial spaces that were created through the exchange of discourse, people and printed materials. I explain how they have helped me to understand how public spaces were integral to the cultural and political desires and ambitions of the British and Indians in Delhi. Most importantly, I reveal how my research makes a crucial contribution to colonial geographies by considering the priorities of the British and the Indians as they constructed access routes to public spaces and constructed the spaces themselves.

## **2.2 Postcolonial theories**

Postcolonial theory raises complex issues about the construction of identities and about the operation of power. It is especially concerned with how discourses defined and constructed colonial identities and spaces. Moreover, postcolonialism disrupts the surfaces of colonial historiography 'not only to chronicle the functioning of Western dominance and resistances to it, but to mark those (subaltern) positions and knowledges that could not be properly recognized and named, only 'normalized' by colonial discourses' (Prakash, 1998: 6). Before I discuss how postcolonial theory has evolved to provoke thoughtful discussions about colonial relations, spaces, and identities, I briefly describe the early foundations of the theory because they were seminal for and remain very relevant to the field of colonial studies.

### ***2.2.1 Discourses and power***

The initial focus of postcolonial theory was on the way that literature by the colonizing culture appropriated the realities, distorted the experiences and, as a result, inscribed the inferiority of the colonized populace. Arguably the most influential postcolonial

theorist, Edward Said pioneered this field of analysis with the publication of *Orientalism* (1978) as well as extending and redefining his debates in *Culture and Imperialism* (1993). In *Orientalism*, Said describes how the West produced the Orient through a series of discourses and he asserts that these discursive constructions of the Orient were a crucial part of the colonisers' strategies to dominate and control the colonised. The originality of Said's contribution is in his use of literary texts and discourses to explain the cultural and political processes of the colonisers.

Said elaborates his assertion that culture and empire are inextricably linked in his careful analysis of European novels in *Culture and Imperialism* (ibid). Said claims that these novels contributed to the formation of new domestic imperialist cultures that provided the legitimation for Europe's relentless acquisition of territory. What resulted from all this was the conversion of the unknown Orient into a colonial space that was familiar and that could be known and mastered. In the latter part of his book, Said shifts his focus to the colonized and to their intellectual and cultural efforts to decolonize, re-inhabit their own spaces and reclaim their pasts. Most importantly, in this latter work, he problematises the relationship between centre and periphery, the colonizer and the colonized, to reveal a complex set of relationships. He is keen to emphasise that colonial categories were never instituted without their transformation and dislocation and that interacting experiences between the colonisers and the colonised contributed to the formation of imperialist cultures.

The emphasis on and use of discourse theory in Said's work is inspired by Michel Foucault's (1978, 1977, 1972) theorising on power, knowledge, subjectification and bio-politics which has been crucial for enhancing our understanding of how power operates in society. Although Foucault's focus is not on colonial studies, his investigations into the operation of power in society and his claims about discourses as

crucial to the institutional operation of that power have been developed by postcolonial studies. By discourse, Foucault does not just mean language, he means systems or regimes of knowledge created and reinforced by discourse. Said adopts Foucault's thesis of the lateral operation of power in order to show how colonial discourses constructed representations of the colonised. However, whereas Said is more concerned with discourses as representations, Foucault's concerns are not with discourses as textual representations, rather, his emphasis is on discourses as materials and on discursive formations as events and historical acts (Young, 2001). Foucault regards discourses as the primary objects of analysis. While Said links discursive representations to other cultural and political processes, Foucault treats discourse itself as a material form of appropriation and subjectification. They both, however, emphasise the significance and power of discursive constructions.

There has been a lot of criticism levelled at foundational postcolonial theory. A major criticism of Said's *Orientalism* is that it only focused on the way that the colonised had been mastered by the colonisers, thereby reinforcing the hierarchical relationship between the two. Said is accused of using the European empires as points of reference and promoting the West as the normative referent and the rest of the world as the 'Other'. Postcolonial theory has been criticised for being built around the concept of 'Otherness' and for perpetuating binary conceptions of colonial relations, i.e. powerful colonisers versus the powerless colonised (Parry 1994; Porter 1994; Ahmad 1992). A major criticism of Foucault is that he pays too much attention to the pervasiveness of power and therefore does not allow for investigations into forms of resistance and agency. These critiques have led successive postcolonial theorists to make considerably more nuanced considerations about colonial discourses and colonial power which I discuss in the following section, however, I must emphasise the crucial contributions



that Foucault and Said made to colonial studies and that are integral to the way that I engage with colonial discourses.

Said's and Foucault's assertions about the ways that discourses constructed spaces and identities are very influential for investigations into colonial and imperial practices. While Said was fairly criticised for emphasising the ways that the West discursively constructed the Orient at the expense of more nuanced considerations of colonial relations, it is very difficult to shift the primacy of his assertions about the universalising strategies of European imperialist cultures. Identity assumptions and stereotypes about colonised peoples were rampant in colonial discourses. The theories of Said and Foucault are indispensable to colonial researchers who prioritise the discursive approach to colonial studies. Catharine Hall (2000) explains that the discursive approach does not only prioritise language and representation, 'but how the knowledge which a particular discourse produces connects with power, regulates conduct, makes up or constructs identities and subjectivities, and defines the way certain things are represented, thought about, practised and studied' (12). To put it differently, discourses are central to the field of postcolonial studies; however, they should be read and interpreted as part of the wider contexts of institutions and practices (Barnett, 2006). Said's and Foucault's work has been very instrumental in informing my discursive approach to the construction of colonial public spaces and identities in Delhi. Discourses connected with other cultural and political practices in order to shape public spaces and the relations within those spaces. However, I have moved on from the reductive emphases on the totalizing nature of colonial discourses that defined early postcolonial theories. I have analyzed discourses from the British and the Indians to show how people from *both* groups participated in defining identities and appropriating public spaces. While I recognise the universalising tendencies of members of the colonial state, I also recognise those British officials who did not perpetuate identity

assumptions and stereotypes and, crucially, those Indians who were fully engaged in the production of their own spaces and identities. Colonial discourses were not only sites for the production of colonial power, but also of diverse forms of British and Indian practices and agency. Moreover, I emphasize the fact that colonial discourses were complex, vulnerable, and constantly being reformed in negotiation with other discourses and in response to local and global cultural and political circumstances. In the following section I explore the theoretical discussions about the complexity and vulnerability of colonial discourses as well as the recovery of native agency that have significantly challenged and enhanced earlier postcolonial theories.

### *2.2.2 Vulnerable discourses and native agency*

Postcolonial theory has developed considerably in the past twenty years in ways that have allowed for a reinvigorated field of colonial and cultural studies which does not simply address colonial power and resistances to it but seeks to investigate the complexity of colonial discourses and native agency. Homi Bhabha (1994, 1991) has been very influential in the field of postcolonial theory with his emphasis on the ambivalence of colonial discourse. He employs a psychoanalytical approach to study the formation of colonial subjectivities which he describes as a process that is in constant formation and flux. He shows that there were always multiple meanings present in colonial representation and it is therefore possible for other discourses to enter and undermine the dominant discourses (Huddart, 2006). Bhabha also introduces the notion of hybridity into the field of social inquiries, which denotes the outcome of processes of interaction between colonisers and colonised which allowed for the creation of new spaces of discourse and practice. Bhabha recovers some of the approaches of Frantz Fanon (1967, 1963) who also used psychoanalysis to show how colonialism constructed

the subjectivities of both the colonisers and the colonised. Bhabha and Fanon show that colonial discourses and colonial power were vulnerable and constituted both the colonisers and the colonised in the formation of imperial categories.

Like Bhabha and Fanon, Gayatri Spivak is concerned with subjectivities in the colonial and the postcolonial context. She too recognises the ambivalence of colonial discourses; however, unlike Bhabha, she warns against the too easy recovery of the consciousness and agency of the colonised, explaining that such moves would undermine the devastating effects of colonial powers. Her essay, "Can the Subaltern speak?" (1994), inspired important debates about the way that colonial studies engaged with and understood the discourses of the colonised. Spivak also engages critically with the *Subaltern Studies* group of historians. The *Subaltern Studies* group has been tremendously influential in colonial and postcolonial studies by shifting the focus away from the discourses and activities of the British and Indian elites in order to analyse the agency of the subaltern peoples such as the peasantry and the lower classes and castes of India (Guha and Spivak 1998; Guha 1997, 1982). My own work focuses on the contributions of Indian elites; however, I want to emphasise that the *Subaltern Studies* group radically influenced colonial studies because it has made significant strides in theorising the agency of subalterns. This emphasis on the agency of colonised peoples as a significant category of analysis has been pioneering for colonial studies and it has raised a number of debates about how native agency can be recovered.

Spivak questions whether it is really possible to recover the agency of subalterns, particularly women and those from the lowest castes. She cites colonial debates on widow immolation in India to emphasise the fact that colonialism and patriarchy worked together to prevent the subaltern from speaking and being heard (see also Mohanty 1991). While Bhabha speaks of ambivalence and hybridity, Spivak reminds us



that opportunities to engage in colonial discourses were only available to educated colonized peoples, not to the subalterns. Rather than trying to recover the consciousness of the subaltern, Spivak points out that it is more useful to recognise the subaltern silences. However, she has been criticised for this view by those who have studied anti-colonial and nationalist practices that succeeded in dismantling colonial structures. Benita Parry (1994) criticises Spivak's insistence on subaltern silence which she says only serves to reify colonial dominance. Moreover, Parry stipulates that 'no system of coercion or hegemony is ever able wholly to determine the range of subject positions' (173). It is possible, and indeed necessary, to undertake colonial discourse studies that recover the practices of the colonised, the subalterns and the elites, in ways that foster more nuanced and deeper understandings of the construction of colonial spaces and identities. My own work looks at the discourses of the colonised elites which engaged with, informed, and often transformed the discourses of the colonisers. I do so in ways that do not undermine the devastating effects of colonial power, which was Spivak's concern with respect to subaltern agency; rather, I emphasise that the practices and strategies of the British colonisers were only a part of the complex social and political formations that pervaded colonial spaces in India. Indians contributed effectively to the construction of their own public spaces and identities in colonial Delhi.

Bhabha and Spivak open up a series of new debates about colonial discourse and native agency. Bhabha shows us that colonial discourses could be permeated and transformed by the discourses of the colonised, thereby paving the way for discussions about the discursive practices of the colonised. Spivak cautions us to be thoughtful when recovering the agency of the colonised, saying that we must question the modes of representing the colonised as well as the legitimacy of those representations. Therefore, while Said emphasises that colonial discourses connected with power and other practices to construct spaces and identities, Bhabha argues that colonial discourses and



colonial power were by no means totalizing. Postcolonial theory has evolved and no longer prioritises a hierarchical view of colonial relations; rather it problematises the relationship between the colonisers and the colonised. Colonial discourses were multilayered, vulnerable and often reformed by the discourses of the colonised. Another critique of postcolonial theorists like Said, Bhabha, Fanon and Spivak is that their theories of colonial discourses and subjectivities are too abstract and ill-suited to understanding colonial spaces and identities at the empirical level. I strongly disagree. The key contributions of postcolonial theory, i.e. the emphasis on the *discursive* construction of colonial identities and spaces and the problematising of colonial discourses and colonial relations have been and remain very relevant to the field of colonial studies. These theoretical concepts can be joined with empirical findings in order to gain a fuller understanding of how colonial societies functioned. In the following section I discuss a selection of Indian colonial studies that have made important inquiries into the processes and practices that constituted Indian society and politics in colonial India and I explain how they have informed my approach to understanding colonial relations in Delhi's public spaces.

### **2.3 Indian colonial studies**

My emphasis in this section is on Indian colonial studies not only because my own work is on India, but because these studies have been exemplary in exploring how social and political formations functioned in colonial India. Previously, I described how the *Subaltern Studies* group has become a significant presence in colonial studies with its Indian subaltern scholarship. The studies I look at in this section analysed the practices of the colonial state and those of the Indian elite in ways that effectively incorporate the key concerns of postcolonial theory with detailed empirical research.

The social construction of difference and the production of social categories in order to know and rule colonised societies have been an important focus of Indian colonial studies. Before Said's *Orientalism*, Bernard Cohn (1971) discussed how the British had gone about classifying and categorising Indians through censuses, surveys, ethnographies, surveillance as well as through the marking of space and the standardization of practices (also see Appadurai 1981). Thomas Metcalf (1994) also reveals the processes by which the British constituted spaces of governance for themselves in India during the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. He describes the formation of British conceptions of India which he says were ridden with inconsistencies and contradictions. When convenient to them, the British thought of the Indians as people like themselves; however, at other times, and indeed most of the time, they emphasised the ways in which the Indians were different from them, in essentialist and deterministic ways, in order to justify their methods of governance. Metcalf argues that it was the theories of India's difference that overwhelmingly dictated how the British formulated their policies (ibid: x).

Nicholas Dirks (2001) also shows how ethnographic concerns dominated British governance in India. Dirks reveals how caste was distinguished as a primarily religious determinant and a fundamental part of an ordering system that 'enabled colonial procedures of rule through the characterization of India as essentially a place of spiritual harmony and liberation [...]' (12). The British made the category of caste far more dominant and pervasive than it had ever been in pre-colonial times. Dirks argues that, before British rule, social and communal referents were far more heterogeneous and, moreover, they were determined by local specificities. Dirks emphasises how colonial governmentality was founded on the political, cultural and racial exclusion of Indians. He considers the power of colonial practices and the significance of their effects for

Indian society, however, he also tries to show how 'knowledge and power were entangled in an unsteady and often unstable history of institutions, representations, legislation, policies, and rhetoric [...]' (304). Significantly, he underscores the value of postcolonial theory in highlighting the power of universalisation, while insisting on recognising those who resist the 'universalization of position and perspective' (315).

Metcalf and Dirks both reveal how crucial ethnographic concerns were to the operation of British governance in India and they emphasise how constructions of Indians' differences, in particular, powerfully informed colonial governmentality. These assertions echo the claims of postcolonial theorists who discuss how European colonisers constructed certain representations about colonised peoples. Importantly, Metcalf and Dirks question the methods by which the British constructed the Indians' identities. Their approaches to understanding the formation of colonial governmentality in this way have been influential for the way I analyse the discursive practices of the colonial state. As I examine the discourses of the British in Chapters Four to Seven, I describe how they excluded Indians from their own public spaces on the basis of specific conceptions about their identities and practices and I emphasise how integral these conceptions were to colonial governmentality. At the same time, however, I show how Indians resisted and negotiated those efforts and persisted in creating access routes to public spaces in Delhi. Indians were always fully engaged in the construction of public spaces in colonial Delhi.

Metcalf and Dirks are influenced by Partha Chatterjee's work on cultural difference as a colonial strategy, used both by the colonisers in their governmental policies and by the colonised in their nationalist rhetoric and practices. Chatterjee (1993, 1986) claims that Indian nationalism was informed by a relationship of both borrowing and difference. He explains that Indian nationalist rhetoric and practice was both a political and cultural



construct, with the former being derivative and the latter being influenced by Indian ideals of religion, family and community. Chatterjee's work is seminal for theorising Indian nationalism as a complex series of processes that were not only informed by European social and political practices and technologies, but also by the Indians' sovereign cultural referents of identity and belonging. Following Chatterjee, there have been some excellent studies that focused on the ways that Indians constructed and employed cultural and political understandings in their relations with the colonisers. One example is a study carried out by Douglas Haynes (1991) on the practices of Indian elites in Surat, in order to understand how they constructed cultural meanings, how they understood the world around them, and how they reproduced those understandings 'in the course of social action' (5). He emphasises that, while the local elites did make reference to political ideals borrowed from their western colonisers, because this was the most effective way of communicating with the colonisers, notions of caste, religion, democracy, public rights and nationalism were defined and redefined continually by the Indians in the course of their encounters with the colonisers. A second example is the work carried out by Gyanendra Pandey (1990) in which he examines the construction of communalism in Banaras. While the British perceived communalism as a 'pathological condition' (ibid: 9), a fundamental feature of Indian society that was age-old, the Indian nationalists viewed it as a recent invention that was the outcome of interactions between the British and Indian elite groups. The work of people like Chatterjee, Haynes and Pandey is so crucial because it carefully examines the contexts within which the Indians created their cultural and political identities and constructed their private and public spaces. In the ensuing chapters, I show how Indian practices in public spaces were informed by political ideals borrowed from the British as well as by their own cultural and political understandings.

The key concepts of postcolonial theory, i.e. the discursive approach to understanding colonial relations and the problematising of those relations, have informed my theoretical framework and the processes by which I engaged with the archival data in order to make sense of the complex public spaces in colonial Delhi. I also benefitted considerably from the empirical studies that I discussed in this section because they all show how the British and the Indians constructed their cultural and political practices in grounded and complex ways. Following the early postcolonial theories and empirical studies, the arena of colonial studies has grown considerably, with many researchers making their studies more temporally and spatially specific, while retaining an emphasis on discursive analyses. Geographers, in particular, have produced colonial histories and geographies that engage critically with the larger narratives of postcolonial theory in order to produce more comprehensive studies of colonial practices and processes, though much more work needs to be done in this field, particularly work that highlights the contributions of colonised peoples to the construction of their own spaces and identities. In order to analyse the agency of Indian elites, I have chosen to study the different mediums through which this agency was articulated, i.e. the urban spaces and the various public spheres in colonial Delhi. In the following section I begin by discussing how postcolonial analysis and the discursive approach can and should inform geographical understandings of colonial relations in public spaces. I then explain how I apply the discursive approach specifically to examining the construction of public spaces in colonial Delhi.

## **2.4 Postcolonial geographies and public spaces**

Geographers working within the field of colonial studies have benefited by engaging selectively and critically with postcolonial theories and thereby contributed to

uncovering the workings of colonialism. To date, colonial geographies have concentrated on a number of intersecting themes, primarily concerning the politics of cultural representation in space. In addition to concerns with imperial mapping and scale (Harley, 1992, 1988; Huggan, 1991), researchers have been interested in the production of space in colonial cities (Kumar, 2002; Jacobs, 1996; Yeoh, 1996, 1991; Alsayyad, 1992; Duncan, 1990; Ross and Telkamp, 1985; Simon, 1984; and King, 1976); spatial representations in travel writing, photography and exhibitions (Duncan and Gregory, 1999; Blunt, 1994; Pratt, 1992), the gendering, sexualisation and racialisation of spaces (McDowell, 1999; McClintock, 1995; Blunt and Rose, 1994; Robinson, 1990); and in the creation of imperial networks or connections between metropolitan and colonial spaces through the movement of people, technology and materials (Ogborn, 2007, 2003, 2002, 2000; Lambert and Lester, 2006; Laidlaw, 2005; Lester, 2003, 2001, 1998) (see also McEwan, 2003; Robinson, 2003; Blunt and McEwan, 2002; Nash, 2002).

Much of the postcolonial geographical research that I described above, with the notable exception of Brenda Yeoh (*ibid*) focuses on the ways that European colonisers constructed the spaces and identities of colonised peoples. These colonial geographies have primarily been written from the metropolitan centre and emphasise the cultural and political practices of European colonisers. It must be noted, however, that the majority of these studies have been carried out in a reflexive way, often questioning and challenging the methods by which the Europeans came to know and appropriate colonial spaces. Postcolonial theory has evolved, as I discussed, to show us that it is no longer possible to write colonial geographies in an un-reflexive way (Proudfoot and Roche, 2005; Sidaway, 2002; Gregory, 1994). This would only serve to perpetuate the reductive dualistic approaches that pervaded early postcolonial theories and colonial studies. Moreover, not only do geographical interpretations help in understanding how colonial spaces were made and controlled but they can also identify those hidden spaces



occupied by the colonised. As Gregory (ibid) reminds us, 'the politics of space was not always and everywhere conducted within (nor could it be brought within) the spatial imaginary of colonial power' (194). However, it is not enough to simply identify the hidden spaces occupied by the colonised; we must make concerted efforts to recover the cultural and political processes by which colonised peoples constructed their spaces and identities.

We must consider, in the same analytical frame, the local practices and discourses of the colonised as well as the colonisers in order to see how 'grand ideas of empire become unstable technologies of power which reach across time and space' (Jacobs, 1996: 158). By problematising relations between the colonisers and the colonised, postcolonial theories have changed the way we look at how colonial spaces were constructed and at the relations between them. Early colonial studies emphasise the ways that the Europeans constructed colonial spaces and perpetuated a hierarchical relationship between the metropole and the colonies. Postcolonial research has shown us that colonised peoples did participate in the construction of their own spaces and that metropolitan and colonial spaces were formed of multiple intersecting trajectories that were continually being reformed, by the practices of the colonisers as well as the colonised (see Anderson and Gale, 1992; Entrikin, 1991). In this view, colonial spaces are open, mobile, porous, and differentiated as opposed to being closed off, entrenched in binary relationships, homogenous and under the total control of the colonial state. However, postcolonial researchers and especially geographers can do much more to emphasize the spatially and temporally specific analyses of colonial discourses and other practices.

In chapters Four to Seven, I look at the Delhi's public spaces as both material spaces and cultural mediums through which meanings and identities were created, political and

cultural practices were carried out and competitions took place (Agnew and Duncan, 1989). These public spaces were vital to the operation and formation of the colonial state as well as to the ambitions and identities of the Indians. The various spaces that I look at, which include physical urban spaces and spaces of discourse and communication such as newspapers, pamphlets, and meetings, were participatory landscapes and arenas in which the British and Indians became involved through the attachment of cultural and political values, through direct action. These public spaces embodied the religious, social and political desires of the different citizens of the city. The significance of these spaces was reinforced by questions of access, control and different conceptions of these spaces or what they meant to the various people in colonial Delhi (ibid). In the following sections I discuss, with examples from existing research, why examining colonial practices in public spaces, both physical city spaces and public spaces of discourse, is particularly relevant for understanding how colonial societies functioned. I also discuss why looking at connections between colonial spaces, such as those created through print culture, is important when constructing geographies of colonial spaces. Most importantly, I explain how I examine the construction and workings of these public spaces in colonial Delhi in ways that consider the discursive practices of the British and the Indians.

#### *2.4.1 City spaces*

As a postcolonial geographer, I am interested in the various discourses and spatial practices that pervaded Delhi's public spaces and I am also concerned with how the British and Indians managed their often competing cultural and political ambitions in various public spaces. Sophie Watson, (2006) emphasises the importance of looking at how 'difference is negotiated and lived' (3) in city spaces. She is keen to point out that

urban analysis must make the articulation of lived differences central to its investigations. Watson uses a fine-grained analysis to examine modes of interaction in everyday public spaces 'which means addressing the historical, socio-cultural and political specificity of each and every public space and the cultural practices taking place there' (ibid: 18).

Public spaces are sites where discourses and other practices and identities are constantly being made and re-made. Watson uses Lefebvre's (1991) notion of representational space, space as psychologically lived in, to emphasise that '[h]ow we imagine a place, space, city in large part creates the conditions of possibility for how we act, which itself creates the contours of that very space' (Watson, ibid: 8).

Most importantly, Watson explains that:

Public space can be material and lived, or symbolic and imagined, though the boundaries between the two are by no means clear. Subjectivities are produced symbolically, discursively, and materially through a network of power relations and practices articulated in space in complex and shifting ways. So too urban encounters are woven across space that are visible and invisible, performed, experienced and conducted through words and silences, glances and gazes, regard and disregard, acknowledgements and hostilities, all of which are differently embodied (ibid: 20).

Watson's observations are consistent with postcolonial emphases on discursive constructions of subjectivities and spaces and on the heterogeneous make up of identities and practices, though her work focuses on contemporary cities. With the notable exception of Yeoh (ibid) and Hosagrahar (2005), whose research I will be discussing below, there is a significant dearth of work that examines the significance of



public spaces in colonial cities for the various inhabitants that occupied them. My work aims to fill this gap in colonial geographical research. In chapters Four and Five I examine the significance of the public spaces of Delhi for the British and for the Indians in the context of religious processions. The discursive construction of the public spaces and the way they were occupied during the processions was significantly informed by the different ways that the various citizens of Delhi imagined those public spaces and their entitlements to them. Analysing them in this way has reveals how crucial public spaces were to the political rationale of the colonial state as well as to the cultural and political ambitions of the Indians.

Yeoh (ibid) looks at the significance of the spatial configurations of the city of Singapore for the people who lived in it. Rather than looking at colonial urban spaces as a product of hegemonic discourses and strategies, she wants to '[examine] the [...] social meanings of [urban spaces] as transformed by social, political and economic conflicts between different groups with different claims on the city' (9). She encourages us to do this by studying the significance of the city's spaces to the people who made various claims to it. The colonial landscape was contested terrain and looking at it this way compels us to look not only at the intentions of the colonial state but also at the meaning of public spaces to the other inhabitants of the city. It is important to interrogate why conflicts over the use of space arose and the various ways that they were resolved. We are not only interested in the social technologies of the British but we are also interested, as Yeoh says, in the 'strategic conduct of the colonized peoples who must be seen as knowledgeable and skilled agents with some awareness of the struggle for control, not just passive recipients of colonial rule' (ibid: 14).

Yeoh was influenced by the work of Anthony King (1976) who, in his study on colonial Delhi, considers how the socio-spatial concerns of the British and the Indians affected

the development of Delhi as a city. He recognises that colonial urban spaces were not only structured by values of the British, but also according to the values, beliefs and practices of the Indians. 'It is these value-systems which legitimise the religious, social, economic and political institutions of the culture and it is these institutions which determine the physical spatial form of each settlement area' (ibid: 34). However, King does not go on to examine the discursive construction of urban spaces in Delhi by the Indians; his emphasis is very much on the practices of the colonial state. This gap in the study of Delhi's urban history and geography has been partly filled by Jyoti Hosagrahar (ibid) who has carried out an excellent study of colonial Delhi in which she examines the modernisation of the city, not only in terms of the spatial and social changes wrought by the colonial state, but also in terms of the customary and indigenously modern practices of the Indians that lived there. Her analysis of the architecture and culture of Delhi between 1857 and 1947 is carried out from the perspectives of the British and the Indians. Her principal aim, as she says, is to 'present insights into, and interpretations of, Delhi's urbanism to unsettle the calmness of an accepted categorization of architecture (and their societies) into 'modern' and 'traditional', 'Western and 'non-Western' (ibid: 2). She examines several different aspects of the city including the changes in domestic dwellings, the changes in public spaces, and the new urban regulations through the introduction of health and sanitary systems by the colonial state. Most importantly, Hosagrahar emphasises that:

[t]he discontinuities and disjunctures express dynamic landscapes that were the consequences of tireless mediation of changing power groups and negotiations over conflicting interests. If the British interventions in Delhi were guided by a Victorian zeal for social and spatial differentiation, the visions of European modernizers, and the ambitions of absolute imperial rule, in the lived city they had to contend with

customary spatial practices, competing local interests and the contestation of colonial authority (ibid: 9).

Hosagrahar's research is pioneering in the way that it thoughtfully considers the social and spatial practices of Indians in Delhi and acknowledges their contributions to the construction of their own spaces. She even briefly discusses the negotiations between the colonial state and the Saraogis over access to the city spaces for the Saraogis' religious processions; however, her analysis concerns a very brief period at the end of the negotiations. I examine the entire process of negotiation and conflict between the state and the Saraogis over a period of over fifteen years in order to show the complex ways that the British and the Saraogis constructed Delhi's public spaces.

Colonial spaces were the subject of contests over meaning and usage by communities of people who differed in race, religion, gender, and status. By encouraging us to examine these contests through careful empirical research, Yeoh and Hosagrahar have made vital contributions to colonial urban studies which have been very helpful for my own engagements with the discursive construction of public spaces in colonial Delhi. In addition to the physical spaces of the city, I examine public spheres, which were also crucial sites for the construction of the cultural and political practices and identities of Delhi's inhabitants.

#### *2.4.2 Print culture and public spaces of discourse*

In chapters Six and Seven I focus on public spaces of discourse or public spheres in Delhi. I pay attention to how newspapers, pamphlets and public meetings were important sites, much like urban public spaces, where the British and the Indians



negotiated their differences, created their identities and made competing claims. By uncovering the complex workings of public spaces of discourse I show how vital these spaces were to colonial governance in Delhi as well as to Indian political activities and identities.

Jurgen Habermas's theories of the public sphere (1989) have been seminal for our understandings of public spaces of discourse and print culture's contribution to them. Habermas describes the public sphere as a space between the state and civil society which accompanied the transition from representative to more democratic forms of government. In this sphere, public opinion could form and evolve and the bourgeois press was a critical aspect of this public sphere. Citizens could participate in the sphere and engage in rational-critical discussion about political matters of common interest, irrespective of differences in their status. According to Habermas, the public sphere was initially constituted in the world of letters, a literary public sphere where people would gather in salons and coffee houses and discuss the latest novel and other literary materials. The literary public sphere led to the creation of spaces and networks of discourse that contributed significantly to the creation of a political public sphere. Importantly, Habermas enquires about the social conditions that are necessary to the functioning of this public sphere (Calhoun, 1992). Most significantly, Habermas emphasises the importance of print culture to the development of the public sphere. The public sphere in Delhi, as I discuss in chapters Six and Seven, was constituted from several public spaces of discourse where Indians could articulate their cultural and political aspirations and also where the colonial government could design its policies of censorship and control. Print culture was crucial to the development of these public spaces.

Habermas's model of the public sphere is a highly rationalized model of societal integration that was contingent on discourse and communication. He does not explicitly consider varying axes of identity such as race, social class and gender nor does he consider power as components of analysis in his discourse model of public space. However, according to Seyla Benhabib (1992), we have the opportunity to expand and enhance Habermas's concepts because the chief virtue of Habermas's discourse model of public space is 'its radical indeterminacy and openness [because] it neither restricts access to public space nor sets the agenda for public debate' (84). Therefore while I agree that the public sphere was a crucial space for social and political integration and that discourse and print culture were crucial to the functioning of the public sphere, in Chapters Six and Seven I emphasise the view that there were multiple public spheres in Delhi that were constituted by various discourses and for multiple reasons. Sometimes they were highly rationalised, like newspapers and planned public meetings, and at other times they were very spontaneous and highly improvised like some political pamphlets, spontaneous public meetings and public protests (Warner, 2002). I apply the concepts of postcolonial theory in order to examine the discursive construction of the multiple public spheres in Delhi by the British and the Indians. In these spaces, different and often conflicting ambitions and practices manoeuvred for articulation and control.

Newspapers, pamphlets and public meetings were spaces of social and political integration but they were also mediums through which connections were made with other colonial spaces. These connections were made discursively in newspapers, as I show with a textual analysis of the *Comrade* newspaper in Chapter Seven, and through the circulation of printed materials and the exchange of discourses between colonial spaces. Print culture enabled the creation of networks and circuits of discourse, not only for the British between metropole and colonies, but also for the Indians between local, national and global spaces. The emphasis on networks and circuits of discourses

and materials is consistent with the aim of postcolonial geographies to see spaces as open, mobile, diverse, and contingent on each other.

The construction of colonial spaces and identities was facilitated by the exchange of discourses and materials between these spaces. Alan Lester's work (2003, 2001, 1998) on the racializing of metropolitan and colonial spaces and especially on the formation of connections between global imperial networks and local colonial geographies has informed the way I look at colonial spaces. In his study of nineteenth century South Africa and Britain, Alan Lester employs a postcolonial discourse analysis to draw connections between British and South African colonial and British metropolitan identities (also see Bridge and Fedorowich, 2003). He provides extensive coverage of the regional make-up of colonialism and convinces us that the discursive practices 'took place across an extensive imperial terrain connecting Britain's colonies and its settler colonies in particular, to the metropole' (Lester, 2001: 5). Lester's primary focus is on the British practices that shaped the Cape. He attributes the penetration of the Eastern Cape to settler capitalism and investigates this process as a set of practices that were conditioned, legitimated and perpetuated through discourse, explicitly recognizing the relevance of the tools of postcolonial analysis. In a similar vein, Ann Laura Stoler (2002a, 1995) makes links between the large scale dynamics of colonial policies and the local sites of their implementation in her studies on Dutch imperialism in the East Indies.

Lester and Stoler have carried out a detailed and thorough analysis of archival records including official colonial reports, personal diaries and newspapers in order to describe the productive capabilities of colonial discourses and other practices. They also, particularly Lester, refer to the works of several empirical historians in order to provide further illustrations of the discourses that were circulating through European imperial



networks, such as, in Lester's example, the maintenance of Britishness that was a vital aspect of metropolitan support and protection for the British settlers in South Africa. Following Lester and Stoler, there have been a series of studies that have served to highlight the value of examining various connections between colonial places and spaces in order to uncover the workings of colonialism at the local and the global scale. David Lambert and Alan Lester (2006) study the careers of colonial officers and Christian missionaries because the life histories and geographies of these individuals 'constituted meaningful connections across the empire in their own right [...which...] were one kind among many which facilitated the continual reformulation of imperial discourses, practices and culture' (2). As geographers, Lambert and Lester are interested in connecting 'people, places and events analytically in the ways that colonial relations had connected them historically' (ibid: 4). Importantly, Lambert and Lester reveal that reciprocal processes of cultural and political constructions of people and ideas were facilitated by several material connections between places. People, discourses and printed materials all altered spaces by creating their own trajectories in material ways (ibid).<sup>1</sup>

Miles Ogborn (2007, 2002, 2000) looks at the circulation of printed materials between colonial spaces in order to show how they contributed to, while at the same time were made by, processes of imperialism. He explains that looking at colonial spaces and the connections between them that work through forms of communication uncovers a whole new range of relationships. Ogborn discusses the importance of various forms of writing and text to British imperialism in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. He traces the

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<sup>1</sup> Zoe Laidlaw (2005) investigates imperial power by asking where such power lay and how it was exercised and she asserts that networks of personal communication were a vital aspect of colonial governance. Also see *Bodies in Contact* (2005), in which Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette Burton emphasise a networked version of empire and Tony Ballantyne (2001) shows us how disparate spaces became connected into networks, as nodal points that facilitated the circulation of discourses, people and materials through empire.

geographies of these different forms of Indian ink from their point of production through their trajectories in space and time. He argues that the exercise of power and the creation of knowledge in the colonial enterprise can be revealed through the examination of different forms of writing that were integral to the deployment of imperialism in Britain and India.

Ogborn (2007) emphasises that print technology, as well as script and oratory, were crucial for the creation of public spheres; however, he asserts that ‘the impact of print in each instance is seen to lie not in the properties of print technology itself, but in the social and political organization of printing and the many different uses of printed materials’ (25). It is imperative to look at the specific contexts in which printed materials were produced and employed by the colonisers and the colonised. As I examine the growth in Indian newspapers and pamphlets, I pay careful attention to the specific cultural and political aims that these public spaces of discourses were created to fulfil as much as I explore the connections that they created between various colonial spaces.

Print created colonial spaces and connections between them as much as it was created by the discourses and practices pervading these spaces. Ogborn shows that the communication of information and knowledge in written form by the colonisers was an integral part of empire building. In this thesis, I describe how the growing use of printed materials and the growth in public spheres was crucial for the construction of Indian cultural and political identities and I show how colonial governmental practices responded to these Indian innovations. Print culture created public spaces that were integral to the lives of politically engaged Indians from the beginning of the twentieth century.

While the research I discussed above focuses on how the colonisers created connections between spaces and identities through the circulation of discourses, people and materials, I emphasise how colonised elites created public spaces of discourse and geographies of cultural and political practice through print culture. Rather than prioritising the relationships between metropolises and colonies which were created and maintained by the British, I highlight efforts by the Indians to create connections between local, national and global colonial spaces, or what may be referred to as peripheral spaces.

Colonial geographers and urban researchers have demonstrated how the tools of postcolonial analysis can be applied to empirical inquiries into colonial histories and geographies. They have proved the effectiveness of carrying out careful archival research in order to interpret the human geographies of colonial processes. They have exposed the dynamism present in the formation of space and identity through various colonial practices and have drawn our attention to the importance of situating local discourses and practices in wider national and global imperial contexts but also of studying the local implementations of the larger ideas of empire. They have shown how materials such as texts can create connections between spaces and how examining the contexts within which these materials are produced can enable us to trace the geographies of colonial discourses and practices. I must repeat and emphasise, however, that there is still a significant dearth of work on the initiatives and contributions of Indians to the construction of their own spaces and identities. Much more research can and must be carried out in order to analyse, not only processes of state formation as the vast majority of colonial studies have done, but also the complex ways that colonised peoples formulated their cultural and political understandings and challenged and transformed colonial discourses in the process. Discourses, people and materials such as



print media shaped relations in Delhi's public spaces, constructed the public spaces themselves and created connections between local, national and global spaces.

## **2.5 Conclusions**

The tools provided by postcolonial theory remain extremely useful for understanding colonial relations in public spaces. Early postcolonial theories were pioneering in that they showed how colonial discourses constructed identities and spaces but they did not effectively show how the discourses of the colonised engaged with, undermined, and reformed colonial discourses because the emphasis in the early theories was on the pervasiveness of colonial power. These theories prioritised discourse analysis as a way to understand colonial power and this form of analysis remains very relevant to the field of colonial studies. Moreover, it has been very difficult to shift the primacy of postcolonial theorists' claims about the universalising tendencies of colonial discourses. Postcolonial theory has gradually evolved to provoke discussions about the vulnerability of colonial discourses and the recovery of native agency and therefore problematised colonial discourses and colonial relations. I would argue that postcolonial theory is now synonymous with discursive analysis that critically examine the operation of colonial governmentality as well as the cultural and political practices of colonised peoples.

The field of colonial studies has also been significantly informed by a number of excellent empirical studies that have effectively analysed the discursive practices of the colonial state and also the complex ways that the colonised peoples engaged with and transformed state practices in the process of creating their own cultural and political understandings. Geographers and urban researchers have contributed to colonial studies

by carefully analysing the spatial practices that pervaded colonial spaces. Urban public spaces were a crucial part of the cultural and political landscapes of colonial spaces and they were important sites for the negotiation of difference and upon which the various peoples made competing claims. Print culture was crucial to the creation of public spaces of discourse in late colonial Delhi. By focusing on the construction of public spaces and the formation of identities within them, existing research has uncovered the complex processes by which the colonisers and, to a much lesser extent, the colonised participated in urban life and in the public spheres. There is a significant lack of focus on the complex engagements of Indians in their cultural and political processes in colonial Delhi, indeed in colonial India.

In the process of studying the creation of links and connections between colonial spaces, the focus of colonial geographers has been on the practices of the European colonisers; there is a remarkable dearth of research on how colonised peoples created connections between metropolitan and colonial spaces and between what are sometimes referred to as peripheral colonial spaces. Postcolonial geographers are particularly well placed to analyse the multiple discursive practices that constructed and connected local, national and global colonial spaces and identities. These discursive practices, in which the British and the Indians participated, were defined by conflict, negotiation and dialogue. As the colonial state attempted to shape and define its various roles in Delhi's public spaces it had to contend, at every stage, with informed and engaged Indians who were also articulating their own desires and ambitions publicly, and vice versa. In the following chapter, I explain how I came to understand these processes by applying the concepts I have discussed in this chapter to the evidence that I uncovered in the colonial archives.

## **Chapter 3: The colonial archives and discourse analysis**

### **3.1 Introduction**

Colonial archives were spaces where information was recorded and knowledge was produced. Archives are not just passive repositories of information; they are active spaces of knowledge production and centres of interpretation (Withers, 2002: 305). Understanding the political significance of the archives is integral to interpreting the material within them. Those working with colonial archives must recognise that, as postcolonial theorists and colonial researchers have shown us, the knowledge produced and stored in the archives was integral to constructing colonial spaces and the identities of colonial peoples. By paying attention to both the form and the content of the archives, it is possible to analyse processes of state formation. It is not enough, however, to simply recreate them; it is imperative to question the methods by which the colonial state came to know colonial societies and to question the basis of the knowledge produced in the archives. Moreover, it is crucial, wherever possible, to locate, engage with and theorise the discourses and practices of the colonised peoples in the archives in order to gain fuller and more nuanced understandings of how colonial societies functioned.

In this chapter I aim to draw attention to the significance of the archive both as a technology of rule and as a centre of interpretation. I discuss how archives can be read both along and against their grain in order to understand how the colonial state and the Indians constructed their cultural and political rationale. As I described in the previous chapter, the processes by which the colonial state constructed public spaces were defined by different dynamics including conflict, opposition, negotiation and dialogue.



As I read through the archival material I identified and analysed several manifestations of these dynamics between members of the colonial state and the Indians in Delhi.

I begin by addressing some of the theoretical and practical debates about the significance of archives as sites of power and technologies of rule. I discuss how archives have and can be read in order to examine how knowledge was produced by the colonial state and how colonised peoples constructed their identities and spaces. I highlight how postcolonial theory has influenced the way we read colonial archives. In section 3.3 I describe in detail how I collected my evidence at the various repositories in New Delhi and London. I describe how I selected the data that I chose to analyse and how I adapted and expanded the parameters of my research according to what I did and did not find in the archives. Following this, I describe the discourse analysis that I employed in order to analyse my data and I reconstruct the process by which I analysed my primary source material. I also explain how I combined it with secondary sources and contextualised it in order to offer wider and deeper insights into the discursive construction of public spaces in colonial Delhi.

### **3.2 Reading the archives**

The traditional notion of an archive is a site where public records are housed. Public records comprise a range of items including government documents, personal diaries, letters, newspapers, photos, and maps. The records that I consulted at the various repositories in Delhi and London contained all these items. As I read the colonial records, I was very aware of the fact that they had been created by the colonial government in order to fulfil certain objectives. Colonial records contained volumes of information about every aspect and from every level of colonial government including

detailed information about the cultural and political aspects of Indians' lives which was classified in specific ways. Postcolonial research (Burton, 2003; Lester, 2003, 2001; Stoler, 2002a, 2002b, 1995; Spivak, 1985) has encouraged us to examine how colonial archives were created and what functions they performed and it has also influenced us to read archives critically in order to question the legitimacy of the knowledge that was produced there and to recover the voices of the colonised or point to their absences. In this section I discuss some of the main theoretical concerns about the functions and practical significance of archives. Firstly I review some of the literature that considers the archive as a space of knowledge and power and as a technology of rule, which complement the claims made by postcolonial theorists about the discursive forms of power of colonial states. I then consider some of the practical approaches towards engaging with archives as centres of interpretation and I explain how these approaches informed my own encounters with the evidence I found there.

In Chapter Two, I discussed the work of Thomas Metcalf (1994) and Nicholas Dirks (2001) who showed us that the collection and classification of ethnographic information about Indians was an integral part of British practices in India. These archives of information had practical purposes: they generated discourses that were fundamental to the establishment and operation of colonial power in India. Thomas Richards (1993) showed that the British Empire produced more information on their colonies than any of their European counterparts. Institutions like the British Museum, the Royal Geographical Society and universities were at the core of the knowledge producing apparatus of the British Empire. Richards describes the British Empire as a 'paper empire: an empire built on a series of flimsy pretexts that were always becoming texts' (3). He asserts that bureaucrats in Britain had to satisfy themselves with the task of collecting and collating information about the colonies and classifying it into

manageable pieces of knowledge because 'it was much easier to unify an archive composed of texts than to unify an empire made of territory' (ibid).

Drawing from Foucault's (1972) ideas about archives as part of a system of governing, Richards explains that the imperial archive was a literary fantasy that 'brought together in fantasy what was breaking apart in fact' (ibid: 6). Richards goes on to carry out a fine-grained analysis of novels to show how they contributed to the creation of the imperial archive, rather than looking at colonial archives themselves; nonetheless, his observations implore us to look at colonial archives critically, as part of an unrealised or partially successful imperial imagination. However, while he stresses the notion of an imperial archive as a space full of fictions and unfulfilled desires, he recognises that it had very material effects. Richards claims that the imperial archive functioned as a powerful, albeit imperfect, technology of the nineteenth century colonial state (see also Cook and Schwartz, 2002; Cooper and Stoler, 1997).

By reading the archival records carefully and by paying attention to the ways that they were constructed, it is possible to examine the cultural and political strategies of the colonial state. This helps us to analyse how the colonial state was being formed or, as Miles Ogborn (2003) puts it, 'thinking in this way aims to reanimate the archive in order to understand state formation in action as a process of knowledge construction' (14). In a similar vein, Ann Laura Stoler (2002a), in an influential article about colonial archives and governance, has focused on 'the colonial order of things as seen through its archival productions' (87). She is more concerned with the form of the archives than with their content, arguing that the archives were 'both transparencies on which power relations were inscribed and intricate technologies of rule in themselves' (ibid) (see also Craggs, 2007; Duncan 1999). She explains that examining the form and constitution of the colonial archives is an effort to question how colonial knowledge was formed and



how the categories that they produced were sustained. Stoler wants us to consider archival work as an ethnographic process rather than an extractive one. She laments:

Students of the colonial experience “mine” the *content* of government commissions and reports, but rarely attend to their peculiar *form* or *context*. We look at exemplary documents rather than at the sociology of copies, or what claims to truth are lodged in the rote and redundant [emphasis in original] (Stoler, *ibid*: 90).

The production of discourses and knowledge about colonised peoples was fundamental to the establishment of colonial governmentality. Interpreting colonial forms of knowledge entails questioning the basis of those forms of knowledge; indeed it entails examining and questioning the dynamics of state formation. In Section 3.4, I discuss how I paid attention to both the form *and* the content of the archival records in the process of understanding the construction of public spaces in colonial Delhi.

While colonial archives were active spaces of knowledge and power construction, it is important to emphasise that they were social constructs, formed of several layers of interpretation and intervention and multiple discourses, which, as postcolonial theorists and empirical researchers have shown us, were vulnerable and often adapted to or were changed by the discourses of the colonised. Moreover, it is imperative to recognise that the information and knowledge produced in colonial archives was always partial and selective. The colonial state recorded what it considered to be the most relevant information and that reflected its priorities. When we engage with archives as centres of interpretation and consider their form in this way, it forces us to question many different aspects of colonial knowledge production, such as the source of the information and the methods of classification. We are compelled to question the reliability of the knowledge generated and the moral and political impetuses behind these processes. As I explain in

more detail in the latter part of this chapter, I have analysed the data in the archives in order to examine the discursive construction of public spaces and identities by the colonial state. The construction of policies and legislation to define and control public spaces was a crucial part of the formation of the colonial state; therefore, by studying colonial discourses in public spaces, I am uncovering the dynamics of state formation. I also question the processes by which the colonial state was being formed and crucially, I analyse the contributions of the Indians to these processes as well as to the construction of their spaces and identities. The formation of the British colonial state was denoted by a series of processes that were defined not only by conflict, but also by dialogue, negotiation, and co-fabrication with the Indians. I discuss this in greater depth in section 3.4 and, indeed, throughout this thesis.

Stoler adds that the critical approach to the archives of late has meant reading them ‘against the grain’ (ibid: 99) in order to locate histories of resistance and give a voice to the colonised. She questions how we can read against the grain without moving ‘along the grain’ (ibid: 100) first. As she puts it:

How can be brush against them without a prior sense of their texture and granularity? How can we compare colonialisms without knowing the circuits of knowledge production in which they operated and the racial commensurabilities on which they relied? If a notion of colonial ethnography starts from the premise that archival production is itself both a process and a powerful technology of rule, then we need not only to brush *against* the archive’s received categories. We need to read for its regularities, for its logic of recall, for its densities and distributions, for its consistencies of misinformation, omission, and mistake – *along* the archival grain [emphasis in original] (ibid).

Postcolonial scholars have emphasised the reading of colonial archives against the grain in order to show how colonial discourses misconstrued the realities of colonised peoples. Research from the *Subaltern Studies* group has revealed how subalterns were often misrepresented in colonial narratives. Guha (1963) describes how colonial accounts of a peasant insurgency which were misrepresented in the original official reports or primary discourses were then misrepresented in tertiary discourses and were ultimately written into history (see Prakash, 1994: 1477). This sort of 'against the grain' or critical analysis by postcolonial scholars has been necessary in order to criticise and to question the validity of universalising claims, to locate the people and voices that had been hidden, ignored and misrepresented and to situate them in their appropriate contexts (see Duncan, 1999; Trouillot, 1995; Spivak, 1985). However, it is not enough to identify absences and locate histories of resistance. It is imperative to analyse, where possible, the discourses and discursive strategies of colonised peoples as integral components in the construction of colonial spaces and identities. As I read through the official colonial records in Delhi, the absence of subaltern voices was very evident. With the notable exception of the work of the *Subaltern Studies* group, there is very little empirical research on colonial India that examines the discourses and practices of the subalterns because they cannot be found in official colonial records. My own work focuses on the discourses of the Indian elite which I was able to locate in several official colonial documents at the Delhi State Archives; however, I have also used non-state documents such as Indian newspapers and personal memoirs in order to construct a workable archive. Indeed, postcolonial researchers have worked with a wide range of sources in order to theorise the agency of colonised peoples and in doing so they have challenged traditional notions of what constitutes an archive. They have widened the narrow path of traditional archival analysis by including more archival material such as images, oral histories and personal memoirs (Burton, 2003).



When I worked with the colonial records and Indian newspapers that I had gathered, I read them along and against their grain. The colonial records included official government documents and Indian letters, petitions and pamphlets. Reading the government records along their grain allowed me to understand how the state's political rationale was constructed and it allowed me to recognise that colonial records were complex and imperfect social constructs that were made up of layers of information. I was also able to trace changes in the priorities of the colonial state over time. As I describe in the chapters that follow, the priorities of the state, as far as the management of public spaces was concerned, adapted in response to the changing political circumstances in Delhi and India and, most importantly, in response to the practices of the Indians. I also read the Indian letters, petitions and pamphlets and the Indian newspapers in order to analyse how the Indians engaged with state discourses and how they constructed their own cultural and political understandings. In addition to reading the records along their grain, I read them against the grain in order to question the claims that the state made and to examine how, for instance, received oral accounts and rumours were often passed off as facts and formed the basis for enduring colonial political practices. I also analysed and questioned the claims that the Indians made in their letters, petitions and newspaper articles. Most importantly, I analysed the discursive strategies of the British and Indians, in processes of negotiation, dialogue and conflict with each other, as I show in the chapters that ensue.

The archives that I worked in were not merely sites from which I extracted material to support my beliefs about processes of colonialism and about the social relations that defined Delhi's colonial spaces. I was always conscious of the social meaning of the archives, as technologies that had been integral to the production of knowledge and power and a part of the apparatus of colonial rule. They were not merely discursive constructs but they also had discursive properties. As Richard Harvey Brown and Beth

Davis Brown (1998) say, 'archives are the manufacturers of memory and not merely the guardians of it' (21). During the processes of interpretation, I was interested in examining specifically why the records had been created and how they were used in the course of colonial practice; in other words, I drew attention to their discursive properties. Inspired by the work of postcolonial theorists, I was determined to uncover the methods by which the British constructed public spaces and made identity assumptions about the Indians but I was also interested in the ways that the Indians constructed their public spaces and their cultural and political identities in practice. I was fully aware of the fact that the official documents that I worked with were only partial records and so, where possible, I used newspapers, personal memoirs and secondary sources. In some cases, as I explain, I used secondary sources extensively in order to construct my workable archive of data. In the section that follows, I describe how I carried out my archival research, after which I explain how I engaged with the data in order to examine the complex socio-spatial relations that pervaded public spaces in colonial Delhi.

### **3.3 Negotiating the archives**

I was primarily interested in the various ways that people accessed public life during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Delhi. I wanted to locate official colonial documents, personal memoirs and newspapers in the archives in Delhi and London that would tell me about the way that the British and Indians organized themselves through discourse and other practices in Delhi's public spaces. In this section I describe the processes by which I looked for and selected my data at the various archival repositories. I also briefly discuss my experiences in the context of the theoretical and methodological issues of partiality and selection.

Before I commenced my fieldwork in October 2005, I had made a preliminary visit to the National Archives of India in New Delhi and met with Narayani Gupta, a prominent Delhi historian, in December 2004. I had visited the National Archives in order to familiarise myself with the databases and to meet with the archivists. I explained my research interests to the archivists and they cautioned me that it was going to be difficult to find information about public social and political interactions between the British and the Indians in Delhi for my specific time period of 1860-1915. They were insistent that I would certainly not find any Indian discourses in the colonial government records; however, they suggested that the Native Newspaper Reports in the library at the National Archives might be a good source. When I met with Narayani Gupta, she also expressed doubts that I would find any records relating to my interests for the specific time period I had chosen. She suggested that there was a considerable amount of accessible material for the period after 1915 and that I might be better off reconsidering my time frame. That would have defeated the entire purpose of my PhD. I was specifically interested in this time period because there hadn't been enough work on it. She did however suggest that I visit the Delhi State Archives, which had a number of files from the Deputy Commissioner's office that contained evidence of the more day-to-day social and political interactions between the British and the Indians. I did not have the opportunity to visit the Delhi State Archives before my actual fieldwork began in 2005; however, a conversation with Stephen Legg, a historical geographer who has specialised in British governmentality in Delhi in the twentieth century, also confirmed that the Delhi State Archives were the best repository for the records that I was interested in. Therefore, even before I had begun my search for evidence, I was directed towards possible sources by a number of experts who were already very familiar with the colonial archives and their relevance for research on Delhi. I had begun my process of selection.



I began the fieldwork for my PhD in October 2005 in New Delhi at the National Archives. I started by reading several guides to the holdings at the Archives in order to get a feel for the general organisation and content of the archival material available. There were basically four separate categories of records: Public Records, Oriental Records, Private Papers and Manuscripts. The Public Records and the Private Papers were the ones that were pertinent to my interests. The Public Records consisted of records from the early British East India Company and the Government of India, through to the late twentieth century and these were further divided into the Home Public, the Home Political and the Foreign and Political Departments which dated from 1748 until 1968. There were no computerised indexes for these records; they were all catalogued in paper indexes. There was also a library at the National Archives which housed the Native Newspaper Reports and several compilations of colonial reports, in addition to a number of books.

I focused on the Home Public and the Home Political indexes for information on local social and political life in Delhi. I looked very carefully through approximately sixty indexes and ordered several files that appeared to be of interest. Apart from three telegrams between the Deputy Commissioner of Delhi and the Governments of Punjab and India concerning riots between Hindus and Muslims, there was nothing about local life in Delhi or about the relations between the Indians and the British in the Public Records at the National Archives. I then turned to the library, where I browsed through several compilations of government reports from the Punjab and I was unsuccessful in locating anything on any aspect of public life in Delhi.

The next records that I consulted at the National Archives were the Native Newspaper Reports for the Punjab, which were housed in the library. Starting from the middle of

the nineteenth century, the colonial state had become concerned with keeping abreast of native Indian public opinion. As I discuss in Chapters Six and Seven, the Indian press grew rapidly from the mid-nineteenth century and the British sought to keep themselves informed about Indian public opinion in vernacular newspapers. To that end, they compiled translated excerpts of vernacular newspapers from all the major regions in India, including Bengal, the Punjab, the United Provinces, Bombay, Madras, Bihar, Sind and Eastern Bengal and Assam. The Punjab newspaper reports consisted of translations of vernacular newspapers from all over the Punjab, including Agra, Lahore and Delhi. I had reservations about using these reports as the principal source of Indian opinion. Firstly, they were only brief excerpts from vernacular newspapers and secondly, and more importantly, having browsed through them, it became obvious that there was little consistency in the stories that were being reported, therefore, it would have been difficult to explore in depth and at length, any aspect of local public life in Delhi. Most of the vernacular newspapers in Delhi only appeared to be in short term circulation, disappearing after only a few weeks. While there may be an interesting story in that, it did not suit the purposes of my research.

In sum, at the National Archives of India, the largest Indian repository for public records relating to British colonialism in India, I did not find anything that would allow me to examine relations between the British and the Indians in public spaces in Delhi for the period 1860-1915. There was an enormous amount of material available to researchers interested in analysing colonial government practices at the provincial, state, and national level; however, there was nothing that contained information about the cultural and political encounters between the British and the Indians on a daily basis in or even in response to significant events in Delhi.

My next stop was the Delhi State Archives. This is a very small building located in south Delhi which houses a number of records relating specifically to Delhi from 1857 until the middle of the twentieth century. This is where I was most successful in locating the records on public life in Delhi. There were two main sets of files that I consulted at the State Archives. These were the Deputy Commissioner's Office files and the Home Confidential files. I began by looking through the indexes (or registers as they are called at the State Archives) and then ordered the relevant files. The Deputy Commissioner's Office files dated from 1857 to 1921. The majority of these files pertained to issues of management and ownership of public land, buildings and gardens and other municipal issues; however, I also discovered approximately fifteen files of varying length on fairs and processions in Delhi. The smallest file contained only three pages, while the largest contained in excess of three hundred pages. These files consisted of a combination of letters, telegrams and statements primarily to do with Hindu, Jain and Muslim fairs and festivals in Delhi. Most interesting were the series of letters over a period of over fifteen years between colonial officers and members of a Jain sect known as the Saraogis concerning an annual religious procession. This was a significant aspect of public life in Delhi that I was interested in exploring further and, most importantly, there were numerous exchanges between the British and the Indians in the form of letters and petitions. I could immediately identify evidence of dialogue, negotiation and co-fabrication between the Indians and the British. The evidence in these files have formed the basis for my analyses in Chapters Four and Five and I describe precisely how I engaged with them in section 3.4.

The next records that I looked at were the Home Confidential files. These contained records that were once confidential and only became public record after Indian independence and they dated from 1913 onwards. Of particular interest to me were the fortnightly reports from the Delhi Commissioner's Office during the First World War,



abstracts from the Criminal Investigation Department in Delhi and miscellaneous letters and documents to do with 'seditious' political activities of the Indians and the measures that were proposed to tackle them. As I read through these files, it became clear that there was definitely a story or a number of stories to be told about the colonial surveillance of the growing public sphere in Delhi. The records in these files have formed part of my analyses in Chapters Six and Seven.

The Delhi State Archives is a very small research facility that is run almost informally. While there was always an archivist present to offer helpful advice, there was not always enough staff to carry out all the other services that were needed. Firstly, the staff worked a very limited number of hours. In most cases, services like the procurement of files and photocopying were only available in the mornings. On a few instances, there was no one available to procure that files that I ordered. Researchers were only permitted to photocopy up to one third of each file, the rest had to be copied out by hand. When it came time to photocopy, there was no toner in the photocopier for over a week and, on a separate occasion; the photocopier was inaccessible for two weeks due to a technical malfunction. The collection of data from this facility was a slow and painstaking process. Sometimes I felt like an archaeologist because, in addition to the indexes and registers, there was a display cabinet full of a random collection of files that were called 'stray' files and that I also spent some time looking through. I did not find anything useful in these files but I had to look through each and everyone one of them in order to discover that, because they had not been clearly classified. On the positive side, because it was such a small facility, I was able to establish a familiar and comfortable relationship with the archivists who were very helpful with the limited resources that they had at their disposal.

I spent approximately ten weeks collecting data at the Delhi State Archives, after which I visited the Nehru Memorial Library in Delhi which holds a vast number of Indian newspapers in both the vernaculars and English, as well as a selection of personal papers of various colonial officers and Indians from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. I was interested in looking at an English language newspaper called the *Comrade*, which was owned and edited by Mohamed Ali and based in Delhi. I was interested in the *Comrade* because some of the Home Confidential files I had read through at the Delhi State Archives had contained several references to it and to its proprietor, Mohamed Ali. They were a prominent feature of Delhi's public sphere in the early twentieth century and the Delhi government had expressed grave concern at their influence. I was interested in further exploring the relationship between the Delhi government and Mohamed Ali and his newspaper.

Having completed my fieldwork in Delhi, I returned to London and spent some time at the India Office Records at the British Library. I had reviewed and categorised the material that I had collected in Delhi and felt that I had enough primary source material for my study of fairs and processions Delhi. I was not, however, satisfied with the material that I had collected on the public sphere activities in Delhi in the early twentieth century. While I had several interesting letters, reports and documents, there were clearly a lot of gaps to be filled and a lot of additional contextual information that was going to be required in order to tell the stories that I wanted to tell.

The India Office Records contain the records of the pre-1947 government of India. They consist of the archives of the East India Company (1600-1858), the Board of Commissioners for the Affairs of India (1784-1858) and the India Office (1858-1947). At the India Office Records, after consultations with the archivists and the databases, I began by reading the Proceedings of the Government of the Punjab, from 1886 to 1919,

as well as files from various other sections of the Punjab Government. I then looked at the Delhi Proceedings from the Proceedings and Consultations of the Government of India and of its Presidencies and Provinces. I also looked through the indexes for the Punjab Government Gazettes from 1872 onwards as well as a few files on various administrative matters in Delhi. When I consulted the records from the Public and Judicial Department, I found some material on the Khilafat Movement and some general commentaries on the political situation in India in the early twentieth century. Some other files I read included Civil Justice and Oral Evidence, 1925; Disorders Enquiry Evidence, 1920; Legislation Orders Relating to the War, 1914; Anjuman-i-Khuddam-i-Kaaba 1914; Delhi Gazetteer from 1884; Delhi Administration Report 1913-1916; Resolutions of Delhi Muslims 1914; and some manuscripts on pilgrimages, fairs and festivals. From all the archival material I read at the India Office Records, I have marginally used some data on religious festivals in Chapters Four and Five and I have used some of the data on the Khilafat Movement as a reference for Chapter Seven. I also consulted the *Comrade* newspaper again, which is available on microfiche at the British Library.

The process of selecting which evidence to use is necessarily complex and does not follow a linear trajectory, as I thought it would. I set out with a number of research questions in my mind and tried to locate records that would be best suited to answering them. Throughout the process of looking for and collecting the data, I was guided by intermediaries. In addition to the advice that I sought from academics like Narayani Gupta and Stephen Legg, the archivists guided the process of my research by offering their advice, even when I didn't ask for it. Because the Delhi State Archives is such a small facility and because I was there for almost three months, I established a friendly rapport with the two main archivists who became interested in the work I was doing and concerned that I wasn't finding the data that I wanted, in the initial phases. They



became almost anxious in their desire to see me succeed in finding the relevant material. I had initially decided that I would look at the time period between 1860 and 1911. The main archivist advised me that expanding it by just a few years would be very helpful because there was a series of files from the Home Confidential series that pertained to surveillance of Indian public opinion during the First World War. Following her advice, I looked at the material and found it to be very interesting and relevant and I have used it extensively in Chapter Six and Seven. The intermediaries were important guides who also encouraged me to rethink the parameters of my research. Therefore, not only are the colonial archives partial records of information and knowledge, but researchers are further influenced and compelled to be selective in the process of extracting these records due to force of circumstance, for instance, when databases are incomplete or when records are unclassified or missing, and also by those who provide access to these resources. I reworked and adapted my research questions and manoeuvred the direction of my research according to what I found in the archives. Far from being linear, the fieldwork experience was very much a circular process. Archival records are formed of multiple layers of information and knowledge and the process of reconstructing that knowledge is also necessarily defined by several steps of selection and several layers of interpretation. In the following section I describe the methods of discourse analysis that I employed in order to interpret the data and I also explain, in detail, how I constructed Chapters Four, Five, Six and Seven around the source material.

### **3.4 Doing discourse analysis**

Discourse analysis is, very simply, the study of social action (Wetherell, Taylor and Yates, 2001). In a more elaborate sense, discourse analysis is the study of the processes by which people produce meanings in their life. By studying discourses, we are

analysing how people construct identities, social relations and spaces. We can extend this to study how institutions and cultures produce meanings through discourse. Discourse, therefore, has constructive powers; it builds identities, relations, and spaces. Discourse analysts are not primarily interested in distinguishing fact from fiction in discourse, rather they are interested in the work that discourses do or how certain representations, identities and spaces are constructed by discourses (ibid).

My approach to discourse analysis has been influenced by Foucault's ideas about discourse and genealogy (Carabine, 2001; Foucault, 1978, 1977, 1972). His major contribution was to show us how discourses produce knowledge and power. He also historicised the notion of discourse by asserting that discourses are only relevant in their specific historical contexts. Foucault's discursive approach is radical in that he insists that it is the *discourses* that produce knowledge, *not* the subjects because the subjects are operating within specific discursive formations and are themselves produced by discourse. While I am convinced that discourses produce knowledge and power and that discourses are best understood in their specific historical and social contexts, I am not convinced by Foucault's assertions about the dominance of discourses over subjects. Subjects both produce and are produced by discourse and it is possible, as I show in the following chapters, for subjects and counter discourses to undermine and transform dominant discourses. There are limits to the control of discourse because 'meanings are fluid and escape their uses and can be mobilized and re-worked to resist domination' (Wetherell, 2001: 25).

I apply Foucault's genealogy selectively to the discourses that I analyse (Carabine, ibid). I examine the productive effects of discourses, for instance, I describe how the British produced certain representations about Indians but I also analyse Indian discourses to show how they produced identities and spaces in colonial Delhi. As I

discuss in the following chapters, there were constant struggles, contests and even dialogues and negotiations between and amongst the British and the Indians over how things should be understood (Hall, 2001a, 2001b; Shapiro, 2001). The British and the Indians attempted to mobilize certain discourses in order to fix or privilege certain meanings over others, so both colonial power and native agency are at stake here and are constantly entangled. I also historicise the discourses that I analyse, in that I trace their changes over time and place them in their historical contexts. I look at how discourses were supported by institutional, cultural and political practices in public spaces; in other words, I look at how discourses were made effective by connecting with other practices (Carabine, *ibid*).

In order to analyse the data with discourse analysis, I began by reading it several times in order to get a feel for it and to familiarise myself with it. I proceeded by identifying the major themes in the discourse, in other words, the main concerns of the British and the Indians, as expressed by them. I also identified the major objects of the discourses, or who and what the British and Indians were addressing. The next step in the discourse analysis was the identification of the discursive strategies employed by the British and the Indians to define and construct the public spaces and each others' identities. I paid attention to the words that they used, the frequency of those words, and I looked for obvious and even subtle patterns. Repetition, persuasive talk and blatant name-calling were common discursive techniques. I also examined how the British and the Indians employed spatial practices in order to produce public spaces. Finally, I examined the effects of the discourses and the discursive strategies by contextualising the data in the appropriate historical, cultural and political contexts and I drew my own conclusions about what the various actors achieved or were attempting to achieve (I have adapted this model of discourse analysis from Carabine (*ibid*: 281) who employed Foucault's genealogical model of discourse analysis in her research).



I will now describe how I applied the discourse analysis to the data.

Firstly, I looked at the evidence on the Saraogis' annual procession or *rathjatra*. There were fifteen files concerning the Saraogis from which I had collected several documents. There was one file, from 1863, which contained over three hundred pages of letters, notices and petitions from the colonial government and the Saraogis. As I read through the files, it soon became obvious that there were two parts to the story. The first concerned the Saraogis' campaign between 1863 and 1877 to gain permission for their *rathjatra*. The second part of the story concerned the actual organisation of and arrangements for the *rathjatra*, after they had gained permission for it, as well as a number of requests by the Saraogis for additional processions in Delhi.

In order to tell the first part of the story, I read through the letters, notices and petitions pertaining to the Saraogis campaign between 1863 and 1877. I was immediately able to identify a sustained dialogue between the Saraogis and various members of the colonial government, from the Deputy Commissioners in Delhi to Government of India officials in London. I identified a number of different discourses, involving colonial officials at all levels of government. Most of all, I was very pleased to find that there were more than fifty letters and petitions from the Saraogis. It was clear to me that I had a very good opportunity to examine socio-spatial relations between the British and the Indians in Delhi in a way that explicitly recognised the desires, demands and strategies of all the people involved.

Firstly, I identified the key themes and objects of the discourses of the colonial officials and the Saraogis. In the early discourses of the colonial officials, they expressed an explicit concern with order in public space, they described the Saraogis' processions as

‘unnecessary’ and ‘evil’ and the Saraogis as ‘cunning’ and in contrast, they described themselves as fair and reasonable and claimed that the processions had been ‘authoritatively prohibited.’ The main theme was public order and the principal objects of the colonisers’ discourses were the Saraogis’ processions and the characters of the Saraogis. I then identified the key concerns and objectives of the Saraogis. It was obvious from their early letters and petitions that they were very concerned with becoming an important part of Delhi’s public life, and initially, the principal object of their discourses was the *rathjatra* itself and their key objective was to establish its legitimacy.

I also identified the key discursive tactics employed by the British and the Saraogis in order to control or gain access to public spaces. The Commissioner of Delhi insisted, in a lengthy report in 1863, that there was insufficient historical precedent for the Saraogis’ processions and, moreover, due to the rivalries between the Saraogis and the Hindus, the Saraogis’ *rathjatra* was a potential threat to public order. Therefore, the key strategies employed by the government were the privileging of its own reasoning over the Saraogis’ requests or a ‘we know what’s best’ argument; and negative identity constructions of the Saraogis and their processions. As I explored the form of the records, their discursive properties became very evident. For instance, the Commissioner’s 1863 report about the Saraogis’ processions was hailed as the definitive assessment of the situation and several years into the Saraogis’ campaign, successive members of the government referred to that report as evidence of sound reasoning and judgement and used it as a basis to continue to deny the Saraogis’ requests. Received accounts and received wisdom constituted an important part of the layers of information and knowledge that were built in colonial archives. The Saraogis’ discursive tactics included the relentless petitioning to all levels of the colonial

government, the constant repetition and the persuasive quality of their arguments, and identity assumptions about the British and the Hindus.

As the campaign went on, I was able to detect shifts and changes in the discourses and strategies of the colonial officials and the Saraogis. The Saraogis' arguments became dominated by concerns with equal citizenship and religious tolerance. The main objects of their discourses became their own rights and the rights of the other Indians in Delhi. They insisted that they should have the same rights as Hindus and Muslims who were allowed to have their own religious processions while the Saraogis were being denied theirs. While the colonialist rhetoric continued to be dominated by a concern for order in public spaces and identity assumptions about the Saraogis, there were colonial officials who supported the Saraogis' cause and their discourses bore the same themes of religious tolerance and equal rights that the Saraogis has become concerned with. In sum, during my analysis of this data, I identified the themes of public order, equal rights and religious tolerance. In Chapter Four, I examine how the discourses of the Saraogis and the colonial officials embodied these themes and how they were linked with the larger theme of access to and participation in Delhi's public spaces.

The discourses that I was unable to locate were those of the Hindus who objected to the Saraogis' processions. My understanding of their objections was informed by what the British and the Saraogis said about them and there was a lot of consistency in both their claims. I also used some contextual material in Narayani Gupta's book (1981) in which she described the local rivalries between the Saraogis and the Hindus.

After the success of their campaign to have their *rathjatra*, the Saraogis had to negotiate the terms of the use of Delhi's public spaces. The second part of my story about the Saraogis is concerned with the *rathjatra*, the actual public space procession. There were



two letters between the British and the Saraogis which contained details about various aspects of the first procession in 1877, including the route and constitution of the *rathjatra*. There were also several reports describing the administrative and police arrangements made by the colonial government for the annual processions from 1877 to 1882.

I started out by reading the letters pertaining to the first procession in order to identify the principal themes in the discourses of the various parties involved. The Saraogis' proposals contained specific details about the procession, such as the duration of the celebrations, the various elements of the processions such as the number and arrangement of musicians, dancers, floats, carriages, and animals, the proposed route and the number of guests, among other things. Their primary objective was to define the temporal and spatial aspects of the procession. There was no persuasive talk; they described very matter-of-factly the arrangements for their procession. The Delhi government responded by asking the Saraogis to make substantial concessions in the duration of the celebrations and the route of the procession. The government was persuasive in requesting the concessions from the Saraogis. The colonial officials were also primarily concerned with the spatial and temporal aspects of the procession, but in a different way. While the Saraogis wanted to use as much space and time for their procession, the government wanted to restrict them. The government's concerns with public order were superseded by more technical aspects of governmentality such as discipline during the procession but they were also, at least for the first procession, concerned with protecting the Saraogis' procession and not offending the Hindus and Muslims. In other words, there is a considerably more complex and interesting story to tell than one about simple discipline and control versus resistance.

In addition to the annual *rathjatra*, the Saraogis sought to perform other public religious ceremonies in Delhi, for which they also had to get permission. I analysed the ways that the Saraogis articulated their requests in order to perform these extra public religious ceremonies and I examine how the Delhi government officials responded to them. Many of the concerns that pervaded the initial campaign that I describe in Chapter Four reappeared during these latter negotiations. The Saraogis used persuasive talk to increase their access to Delhi's public spaces while the British persuasively restricted or denied the Saraogis the access, by making assumptions about the motives and identities of the Saraogis. In these latter cases, the colonial officers were more blatant in the expression and use of their authority and power, but even so, they had to negotiate with and make allowances for influential Indian elites and they constantly had to justify their decisions. In sum, in Chapter Five I continue the story of the Saraogis' *rathjatra*. I analyze the negotiations between the British and the Saraogis over various aspects of the *rathjatra* to show how, while questions to do with the use of public space still pervaded the discourses of both parties, there were now different sorts of concerns, to do with the practical spatial and temporal aspects of a public religious ceremony.

In Chapters Six and Seven, I describe British and Indian involvement in the Indian public sphere, which comprised various public spaces of discourse. At the Delhi State Archives, I located a number of documents that described British concerns with growing nationalistic Indian public spheres and that contained some details about the colonial government's efforts to curb and control them. I also located some letters, pamphlets and Indian newspapers that described the various ways that Indians in Delhi were participating in the public sphere. Working with these documents was considerably more challenging because, while I located several interesting documents, they were located in several different files with no ostensible link between them. Some of the data was patchy, with important information missing. My search at the India

Office Records in London did not uncover any significant primary source material that could fill in the gaps in the data. Therefore, I used some secondary source material in order to create coherent and sustained analyses about the public sphere activities in colonial Delhi.

Most of the data was from the early twentieth century and particularly concerned the growth of 'sedition' in India after 1905 and the growth of revolutionary Indian literature in pamphlets and newspapers. There were also an interesting series of reports entitled the Fortnightly Reports, which, in Delhi, had started following the outbreak of the First World War. These contained reports by the Deputy Commissioner and the Commissioner in Delhi concerning the political situation at Delhi with a specific emphasis on Muslim and Pan-Islamic activities and Indian public opinion. Unfortunately, the reports only existed for 1914, 1915 and 1917; they were missing for 1916 and 1918. The Delhi State Archives had recorded them as lost.

After reading through the data I recognised that there were two periods of heightened public sphere activity in Delhi. The first one was between 1906 and 1912 when there was a marked increase in political activities in response to the proposed partition of Bengal. The second concerned the growth of Pan-Islamic activities immediately prior to and during the early years of the First World War. In Chapter Six, I focus on the period between 1906 and 1912. Among the primary source material were government documents concerning legislation against seditious meetings and a document containing instructions to schools and colleges to be wary of and curb seditious activity among teachers and students. I also found documents containing information about legislation of the Indian press and details of two specific Acts, the Newspapers (Incitement to Offences Act) from 1908 and the Press Act from 1910. I found very little evidence of Indian discourses, apart from a document that contained Indian expressions of loyalty to



the British during the First World War as well as an Indian pamphlet celebrating the Delhi bomb of 1912.

I set about reading a number of empirical accounts of the growth of the Indian press, the measures taken by the colonial government to define sedition and curb the burgeoning Indian public spheres, and accounts of the political activities of the Indians in Delhi. I found a book by William Donogh called *The History of Law and Sedition and cognate offences in British India* (1911) in which he had carried out a detailed study of the various measures taken by the colonial government to define sedition and to create legislation in order to regulate the Indian press and public meetings. Donogh's study, which contained the various Sedition and Press Acts in their entirety, was indispensable in helping me to create a fuller study of the British government's strategies to regulate the Indians' access to public spaces of discourse. I also referred to books by Jagannathan (1999), *Independence and the Indian press: heirs to a great tradition* and Margarita Barns (1940), *The Indian press: a history of the growth of public opinion in India*. Finally, I used a book by Sangat Singh (1972), *Freedom movement in Delhi, 1858-1919*, who used the files of the Criminal Investigation Department (a branch of the colonial government) in order to construct his study of political activities in Delhi. I was not able to locate the files of the Criminal Investigation Department in any of the archives in India and London. I have used Sangat Singh's book extensively to provide important contextual information but especially to provide evidence of the practices of the Indians during this period in Delhi. Sangat Singh's book focuses on the practices of Indian political activists in Delhi and I have used it to analyse how Indians constructed public spaces of discourse, as I describe fully in Chapter Six.

I started by reading and analysing the different laws that the British had created in order to define sedition and to regulate the Indian press and public meetings. A recurring

theme in the British discourses was danger and harm and the chief objects of the British concerns were the Indians' spoken and written words. The state repeatedly emphasised the harmful effects of words. As political activities increased in India and a minority of them took on a particularly violent form, the government passed further press laws, which linked explosive substances and murder with the growth in print culture. This strategy of using persuasive rhetoric to link violence with words, texts and speeches dominated the colonial discourses that I examined.

I also read the evidence in Singh's (ibid) in order to examine the practices of the Indians in Delhi, in the context of the anti-partition activity in Bengal and the government's incursions in the public sphere. I identified their discursive and spatial strategies for creating public spaces of discourses and networks of political activities. Finally, I analysed a government notice as well as an Indian pamphlet which were both created in response to the Delhi bomb of 1912. The government persisted in making links between violence and words in its notice while, in the Indian pamphlet, the author used very strong rhetoric to recommend the use of violence in order to fight for Indians' rights and dismissed the effectiveness of mere talk. Violence was the common theme and words were common objects, but the link between them was made very differently. In sum, in Chapter Six, I examine the discursive effects of the government's practices on the growth of public spheres in India. I analyse how the state constructed itself as interpreter and judge of Indian discourses in order to exclude Indians from their own public spaces of discourse and I describe the diverse discursive strategies of the Indians in Delhi that were responsible for the creation of public spaces of discourse.

The next set of documents that I worked with were the Fortnightly Reports that the Delhi government had compiled, at the behest of the Government of India, in order to report on the local political situation at the onset of the First World War. The

government paid particular attention to what Indians were saying about Britain's involvement in the War and especially to Muslim reactions and Mohamed Ali's activities in relation to Turkey's involvement in the War. As I described previously, the Delhi State Archives only had the Fortnightly Reports for 1914, 1915 and 1917. They were missing for 1916 and 1918. As I read through them, I realised that this was not a disadvantage because the early reports focused on Mohamed Ali, the *Comrade* and Pan-Islamism whereas by 1917, the state's concerns had shifted to the Home Rule movement. Within the Fortnightly Reports, there were several references to specific articles in the *Comrade* which had been identified as seditious and numerous descriptions of Mohamed Ali's character and activities. My next step was to read the *Comrade* and Mohamed Ali's autobiography, *My life: A fragment* (1999), edited and annotated by Mushirul Hasan.

I began my analysis by reading the *Comrade* in order to get a feel for the organisation of the newspaper and to see if there were any dominant themes or if there was an obvious bias in the paper. A recurring theme was a global concern for Muslims and the idea brotherhood of Islam or Pan-Islamism. The main objects of Ali's discourses were Muslims and Muslim countries. There were also, however, several other sub-themes such as Indian nationalism, education and press censorship. In these cases the main objects were Muslim-Hindu relations, Muslim colleges and universities, the colonial state and the press acts. Mohamed Ali used a lot of creative flair in his writing and a lot of persuasive and passionate rhetoric, especially when writing about Muslim causes. My aim was to carry out a general survey of the newspaper and to extract brief selections of articles in order to show the diverse make-up of the newspaper but also to show that Ali's emphasis was on Muslim causes.



Next, I carried out an analysis of an editorial called “The Choice of Turks” from the *Comrade* that the state had identified as seditious and for which Mohamed Ali’s printing press was prosecuted. This was a very complex article with a number of themes. Much of the article was about Turkey and Egypt, which was occupied by the British at the time. The state had identified a dominant anti-British and pro-German theme in the article. I did not identify those themes in the article. Ali expressed both antipathy and sympathy for Germany and he also expressed both criticism of and loyalty for the British state. I have shown that this was a multilayered article which was designed to fulfil a number of objectives, which I discuss fully in Chapter Seven. My main aim in carrying out this analysis of the *Comrade* is to show that this newspaper was a complex public space of discourse which Mohamed Ali used for a number of purposes but which the state attempted to reduce to a subject of colonial governmentality.

Finally, I analysed the Fortnightly Reports in order to reveal the main concerns and discursive strategies of the colonial state. In the reports on Indian public opinion, the dominant theme was the threat of Muslims and Pan-Islamism. The main objects were Muslims and Mohamed Ali. There were numerous references to seditious articles in Muslim newspapers and to the negative influence of Mohamed Ali on Muslims and words like ‘dangerous’ and ‘evil’ were used to describe him and his activities. In contrast, Hindus were described as ‘timid’ and ‘lacking in political cohesion’ and uneducated Indians were described as ‘ignorant’ and ‘incredulous’. My aim is to describe how the British used these discursive strategies in order to construct a very specific identity of Mohamed Ali as a dangerous man and how they simplified the very complex objectives of Mohamed Ali which I uncovered in my own analysis of the *Comrade*. Reading through the evidence, it also became clear that there was an opportunity to examine how Indians constructed connections between local, national

and global spaces through exchanges of people, discourses and printed materials, which I do in Chapters Six and Seven.

### 3.5 Conclusions

Colonial archives are sites of power and centres of interpretation. The knowledge that was generated in the archives was used to rule colonised peoples and today, we use that knowledge to reconstruct colonial histories and geographies. Whether one understands them as technologies of rule or as mere accumulations of data (Withers, 2002), the fact remains that we rely on the information in them to shape and guide the direction of colonial scholarship. Moreover, as I have described, throughout the process of gaining access to and using the evidence in the archives, we are compelled to be partial with the evidence that we use. Those who emphasise the archives as spaces of power and then use them as sources of information are presented with somewhat of a dilemma because they could be accused of perpetuating the colonial discourses and strategies of power. This is not necessarily the case because, by drawing attention to the way the archives were constructed and questioning the basis of the knowledge that was produced there, we are not simply reproducing colonial forms of knowledge; rather we are understanding the construction of the colonial state's rationale, interrogating it and revealing the inconsistencies and gaps in information. We can read these archives both along and against their grain, paying attention to both the form and the content, in order to understand processes of state formation and native agency.

As I worked with the colonial records, I was always conscious that I was working with records that had been created by the colonial state for specific purposes. In the case of the Saraogis' *rathjatra*, I was very pleased that there were several letters and petitions

written by the Saraogis. According to my survey of the numerous files, the letters and petitions had been kept in their original form as part of the correspondence between the government and the Saraogis. Though, as I have described, the evidence in these records was used in specific ways and formed the basis of dominant colonial discourses about public order. As I explored them, I could clearly identify how colonial records functioned as technologies of rule. However, not only did I reveal the discursive strategies by which the colonial state constructed the public spaces of Delhi and the identities of the Saraogis and the Hindus, I also questioned them. Moreover, as I have described, I worked with the evidence in the Saraogis' numerous letters and petitions to uncover how they constructed public spaces and identities and, indeed, how they shaped the colonial state's policies in Delhi's public spaces.

In the case of the material on the Indian public spheres in the early twentieth century, I found very little evidence of Indian discourses in the official colonial records. In addition to using non-state records such as the *Comrade* and Mohamed Ali's memoirs, I used Sangat Singh's (ibid) book for some data on Indian discursive practices which had used the files of the Criminal Investigation Department as its main sources. In other words, I relied on colonial accounts of what the Indians were doing. Nevertheless, this has certainly not prevented me from examining the discursive strategies of the Indians in the context of the colonial state's legislation against the press and public meetings. There was a significant amount of evidence about the diverse political practices of Indians in Delhi which I have used to describe how Indians constructed and participated in public spaces and to show that Indians were skilled, informed, and innovative agents. I have shown how Indians constructed landscapes of political practice and how they mobilised discourses and other resources to that end. I have, as I show in the following chapters, studied the construction of multiple public spaces in colonial Delhi in ways that recognise the ambitions, rationale and strategies of the British and the Indians.



## Chapter Four: Public spaces and religious processions

### 4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I examine the campaign by a minority Indian sect known as the Saraogis<sup>2</sup> to carry out an annual religious public procession or *rathjatra* in Delhi. The Saraogis faced opposition from certain members of the colonial state and from members of Hindu sects in Delhi such as the Vaishnus and the Khatris<sup>3</sup> in their bid to hold their *rathjatra*. I analyse the discourses and the discursive practices employed by the Saraogis in order to define and lay claim to Delhi's public spaces. I also look at the rhetoric and strategies of colonial administrators at various levels of the Indian government in response to the Saraogis' demands, in order to show how they made their own claims to and defined Delhi's public spaces.

I look at the meanings attributed to the spaces of the city by the Saraogis, the British and other Indian groups and I show that Delhi's public spaces were an important theatre of activity and a medium through which social and political competitions were expressed and relationships negotiated. There was no straight forward binary opposition between colonisers and colonised. Conflicts and competitions existed, not only between the Saraogis and the state, but also between Indian groups as well as between colonial officers within the state. Examining these complex local encounters offers an opportunity to engage constructively with and enhance grander narratives about colonial socio-spatial relations and contributes crucially to historical geographies of colonial spaces.

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<sup>2</sup> There are various spellings of the name of this sect in the archival documents that I have consulted: Sarogis, Surraogees, Sarogees, Surowgees. I have selected the one used most often: Saraogis. They are also referred to as being from the Jain sect.

<sup>3</sup> The Vaishnus are also known as Bashnavies, Vaishnavies and Vaishnavites and are also referred to as Brahminical or Brahmanical Hindus. The Khatris are also referred to as Khutries or Khutrees.

In the following section I explain the significance of public spaces for the formation and mediation of identities and relationships, drawing on Sandria Freitag's (1989) pioneering work on public arenas. In section 4.3 I examine the dominant colonial discourses of public order and tolerance as well as the early Saraogi narratives in order to describe how the various participants defined and appropriated Delhi's public spaces. In sections 4.4 and 4.5 I identify the key developments in the Saraogis' discourses and strategies in order to show how they formulated a skilful and effective campaign, built around the issues of equal rights, in order to make space for themselves in Delhi's public life. I also describe the alternative colonial discourses that aligned themselves with the Saraogis' discourses and contributed to the erosion of the dominant colonial narratives that defined Delhi's public spaces.

## **4.2 Religion, community, and politics in public spaces**

Public processions and displays were an important and regular manifestation of the religious life of Indians. In Delhi, Hindus and Muslims constituted the majority of the Indian population. In an 1881 census, the population distribution among the main religious groups in the city of Delhi was thus: 95,484 Hindus, 72, 519 Muslims, 2,676 Jains and 856 Sikhs.<sup>4</sup> There were public religious displays for the Hindu festival of Dassehra and for the Muslim festivals of Id and Muharram (Clothey, 2006; Kumar and Gajrani, 1999; Lall, 1933). In addition to these festivals, there were more than thirty religious fairs and small festivals celebrated periodically in the Delhi district.<sup>5</sup> They differed in significance and scale and many of them were purely of local interest.

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<sup>4</sup> I.O.R.L.: Gazetteer of the Delhi District 1883-1884, Delhi Administration. All archival sources are referenced in footnotes. Please see p. vii for explanations of abbreviations.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

Dassehra and Muharrum were two festivals where processions played a major role. These processions and displays usually included the movement of people, animals, floats, and other religious and cultural artefacts through the main streets and public spaces of villages, towns and cities all over India. Dassehra is a Hindu festival which celebrates the victory of good over evil, commemorating the defeat of the evil Ravana by Ram and the rescue of Sita. During Dassehra, a large effigy of Ravana is paraded through public spaces before being burnt and toppled and the Ramlila, or story of Ram and Sita, is depicted through public dramatic performances. Muharrum is a period of mourning to commemorate the death of Prophet Muhammad's grandson Husain. During Muharrum, *tazias*, which are structures typically made of a wood such as bamboo, are often heavily ornamented and taken out in public procession.

In nineteenth century colonial Delhi, festivals like Dassehra and Muharrum were more than public expressions of religion; they were cultural public space performances. They also served to define community symbolically and to legitimate membership of urban public life. During the colonial occupation of Delhi, the state played a key role in regulating religious processions in Delhi's public spaces. Sandria Freitag (1989) has carried out pioneering research on the significance of communal activities such as religious processions in public spaces in Northern India. In order to illustrate the evolving relationship between the colonial state and the Indians she looks at collective activities in public spaces and their significance for the representation of community. She refers to public spaces as public arenas and defines them as 'coherent, consistent [realms][...] of symbolic behaviour' (ibid: 6). Freitag is especially interested in the 'symbolic enactments of events and rituals that simultaneously delineated common values and drew on shared historical moments and locally significant cultural referents' (ibid: 5). Religious rituals in public spaces espoused common religious ideologies and



practices; however, they were also local events and therefore reflected local aspects and concerns. Moreover, as I show in this chapter, local cultural and political conflicts between a city's inhabitants often translated into competing claims over access to public spaces. Through her examination of religious rituals in Benares, Freitag shows that 'public arena activity [...] provided a structure through which other kinds of social and political competitions could be expressed [and] the symbolic behaviour of this arena made it ideal for such purposes' (ibid: 35). Public spaces were very important for the outward expression of religious and political dimensions of community.

Freitag provides a nuanced analysis by differentiating between elite and popular preoccupations of the public arena participants. It was the Indian elites who were most used to interacting with the colonial state and as the nineteenth century progressed, Indian discourses became more informed and sophisticated. Indians participating in public arenas became more skilled in their dialogues with the colonial government. When Freitag looks at events in late nineteenth century Bareilly she looks at how 'participants moved back and forth between exercises expressing localized forms of community and those referring to a larger community constructed on shared ideological bases' (ibid: 123). This brings to mind Chatterjee's (1993, 1986) notions of borrowing and difference that I discussed in Chapter Two where he explains that Indian nationalist discourses were based on ideas of both similarity to and differences from the colonizers. I show in this and successive chapters that Indian elites employed multiple discursive strategies that included claims of similarity and difference and that constructed multiple notions of identity and community in public spaces.

In her discussion of the role of the colonial state, Freitag explains that the British played an integral part in public arena activities in order to maintain public order and arbitrate between groups that had competing claims to public spaces for religious and political

purposes. In Delhi, after the 1857 Revolt, the colonial government regarded the maintenance of public order as a high priority and I describe how they had to negotiate with the Saraogis and other Indians in the formulation of their public space policies. I delineate and examine the significance of the shifts and changes in the role of the state in the construction of Delhi's public spaces.

Through her close archival analysis, Freitag has made a very convincing case for the importance of looking at public space activities in colonial studies. In Chapter Two, I discussed the work of Yeoh (1996, 1991) and Hosagrahar (2005) which makes concrete considerations of the significance of public spaces for the inhabitants of colonial Singapore and Delhi, respectively, and shows how colonised peoples were active participants in the construction of public spaces. Public arenas in colonial cities were crucial for the expression of religious, communal and political identities. In this chapter I demonstrate how the British and the Indians constructed their cultural and political practices and identities in Delhi's public spaces. The discursive constructions of Delhi's public spaces were denoted by a series of complex engagements between the British and Indians. In the following section I discuss the discourses about public order and tolerance that dominated the early negotiations between the colonial officers and the Saraogis over access to Delhi's public spaces.

### **4.3 Public order and tolerance**

In Chapter One, I briefly described the impact that the 1857 revolt had on the population of Delhi. Following the revolt, the colonial state placed considerable emphasis upon maintaining public order and preserving public peace in Delhi. The administration of the Municipality was largely dictated by the Police Act of 1861. The

Police Act prioritised the raising of municipal funds for the police (Gupta, 1981: 70). It was during this period that a series of negotiations and conflicts arose, primarily between the Saraogis and the colonial administration, over access to Delhi's public spaces.

A few conflicts between different religious groups of people had taken place in Delhi during the early to mid-nineteenth century. Gupta has argued that the British were constantly concerned about local tensions because Delhi was a compact, densely populated city with 'clearly demarcated religious, caste and *mohulla* [neighbourhood] affiliations and a strong historical tradition' (ibid: 12). In 1837 there were tensions between the two main Muslim sects in the city, the Sunnis and the Shias over the issue of *tazias* taken out in public procession during Muharrum. In 1853 and 1855 troops were called on to prevent possible clashes during the Muslim celebration of Id and the Hindu Ram Lila. The issue of cow slaughter was also a bone of contention between Hindus and Muslims. In 1853 the Commissioner, Thomas Metcalfe, had issued a decree allowing Muslims to slaughter cows on special occasions such as Id. Hindu shop owners went on strike for three days until the decision was rescinded. Gupta explains that these decisions by the British were informed by their own desire to consume beef (ibid: 9). Thereafter, in the 1860s, the colonial government was confronted with the Saraogis and their determination to carve out a space for themselves in Delhi's public life.

The Saraogis belonged to the Jain sect and they were a prosperous minority group in Delhi. They were very prominent in the business sector and along with the Hindu Khatri and Baniyas and the Muslim Shiekhs, controlled the finances and retail trade of the city (ibid: 41). Saraogis also held positions in the Municipality. Indians who had obtained positions within the Municipality were from families that had long been



established in the city and often with a tradition of service in the East India Company who had stayed loyal to the British during the 1857 revolt. In 1816 and 1834, the Saraogis carried out a religious procession in Delhi. This procession, also known as a *rathjatra*, consisted of a huge float bedecked with colourful decorations and accompanied by music, on which an enormous wooden image of the Saraogi god called Parusnath<sup>6</sup> was placed and then paraded through the public spaces of Delhi. These processions were met by protests from the Hindus, primarily the Vaishnus, in the city. The reasons for the Vaishnus objections to these earlier Saraogi processions are not entirely clear, however, Gupta has stated that a business rivalry existed between the Saraogis and Hindus in Delhi after 1857, particularly between their respective leaders, Lala Rammi Mal and Lala Mahesh Das, who were both very wealthy and influential bankers in Delhi (ibid). The Saraogis were also resented by the Vaishnu Hindus because they refused to give their daughters in marriage to them and refused to partake of their religious feasts. Furthermore, the Vaishnu Hindus claimed that the idols of the Saraogi gods in their temples were naked and obscene. As I show, the apparent obscenity of the Saraogi idols was often cited as the principal reason for the Vaishnus' objections. Following the protests by the Vaishnus in 1834, the Commissioner had banned all Saraogi processions. It was not until 1863 that the Saraogis launched a vigorous campaign in order to regain access to Delhi's public spaces for an annual *rathjatra*.

On the 24<sup>th</sup> of April 1863 the Saraogis obtained permission from the District Superintendent of Police at Delhi for a procession to carry an idol of their god Parusnath to a temple outside the city on the 25<sup>th</sup> of April. According to a report<sup>7</sup> by the

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<sup>6</sup> I have referred to Parusnath as a Saraogi god because that is what he is called in the colonial documents, both by the Saraogis and the British. To be precise, Parusnath or Parshvnath, as he is called in the secondary sources that I have consulted, was one of the twenty four Jinas or Tirthankars, divine ascetic renouncers who founded and re-founded the Jain religion. It is to the Jinas that prayers are addressed in Jain temples and the temples are often named after or devoted to a Jina (Humphrey and Laidlaw, 1994: 15 and Laidlaw, 1995: 83-85).

<sup>7</sup> D.S.A.: 1/1878/D.C.

Commissioner of Delhi, they had surreptitiously been making the preparations for a while but only came forward with their request when all the arrangements were already in place. The Saraogis also applied for an escort of mounted and foot police because they anticipated protests from the Hindu groups and wanted protection for their *rathjatra*. The Superintendent had arrived only recently in Delhi and was apparently unaware that Saraogi processions had been banned since 1834. He therefore granted permission for the procession but refused to provide a police escort. The procession had already begun when the Deputy Commissioner of Delhi received a petition from several Hindus, particularly Vaishnus and Khattris, to halt the procession, with the result that the procession was rerouted through a quieter part of the city via the Ajmere Gate and past the Jama Masjid, rather than through Chandni Chowk, the main processional space. This was very disappointing for the Saraogis because they wanted to go through the main public spaces in Delhi in order to ensure a maximum audience for their procession. I discuss the significance of the route of religious processions in greater detail later in this chapter and in Chapter Five.

On the 21<sup>st</sup> of May 1863 the Saraogis petitioned the Deputy Commissioner for another procession due to the fact that the previous one had not been permitted to pass through the main streets of Delhi. The Deputy Commissioner allowed the procession but again stipulated that it must not go through the main streets of Delhi and once more a police escort was refused. He received another series of objections from the Vaishnus and Khattris, but he allowed the procession to continue. Upon reviewing the events that had taken place and in light of the objections by the Hindu groups, Commissioner Hamilton of Delhi, with the approval of the Government of India, declared a ban on all Saraogi processions, citing the principal reason for the ban as the excitement caused in the city due to objections by the Hindu groups and adding that these processions had been prohibited for many years. The Commissioner claimed that it was 'reasonable to

suppose that they have been authoritatively prohibited'.<sup>8</sup> He also claimed, following his enquiries, that the *rathjatra* had only taken place twice before in the early nineteenth century and that on both occasions, disturbances had only been prevented due to the presence of a large police force. The Commissioner stated that 'it is the general impression among the residents of the old standing'<sup>9</sup> that no Saraogi processions had occurred after 1834, even though the destruction of relevant records in the 1857 Revolt prevented him from verifying that fact.

He went on to claim that the *rathjatra* was 'not a necessary or essential portion of the religious duties'<sup>10</sup> of the Saraogis or Jain religion. While he recognised that effective police and military arrangements would be able to prevent public disturbances should the processions be allowed to take place, he thought it undesirable to cause offence to the other Indian groups in Delhi who were united 'in their detestation of the public religious ceremonies'<sup>11</sup> of the Saraogis. He asserted that 'it cannot be doubted that the open performance of the proposed ceremonial processions would cause a bitter feeling of insult among the other and far more numerous sects of the population'.<sup>12</sup> Commissioner Hamilton emphasised that his decision was not motivated by religious intolerance, rather by the 'evil effects of public exhibitions of a sectarian character in perpetuating [...] animosity and in causing popular tumults'.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, the suppression of the Orange Processions in Ireland had proved the benefits of preventing these exhibitions. If the same policies were being applied in Delhi as had been in the British Islands, where 'religious tolerance and freedom prevail to the fullest extent',<sup>14</sup> then there could be no accusations of religious or racial prejudice. Moreover, these

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<sup>8</sup> D.S.A.: 1/1863/D.C.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid

<sup>10</sup> Ibid

<sup>11</sup> Ibid

<sup>12</sup> Ibid

<sup>13</sup> Ibid

<sup>14</sup> Ibid



processions were a serious inconvenience and annoyance to the public in a busy commercial centre like Delhi and 'considering the recent history of [Delhi] it is also essentially necessary that all public demonstrations and any thing likely to cause public excitement or popular irritation should be carefully avoided'.<sup>15</sup>

The Commissioner continued his report by describing the Saraogis as a cunning group of people who were fully aware that their processions would have been 'obsolete if they had not been prohibited'.<sup>16</sup> He accused them of knowing full well that previous *rathjattras* had been attempted with 'disastrous' results and he criticised their insistence on taking their procession through the main streets of the city where another Hindu festival would be taking place, rather than the 'inoffensive'<sup>17</sup> route assigned by the Deputy Commissioner. He added that the Saraogis had falsely claimed that their processions were a regular occurrence. Finally, he stated that ceremonies of an 'ordinary' character that had been permitted after 1857 should be allowed to continue except if there was a threat of 'public annoyance and popular excitement'.<sup>18</sup>

The main thrust of the Commissioner's report was that the Saraogis *rathjatra* presented a threat to public order. The Commissioner's decision was ostensibly motivated by the opposition from the Hindu groups and the potential unrest that may have resulted had the procession been allowed to go through the main public spaces of the city. However, to state that the *rathjatra* was not essential or even important to the Saraogis' religion because only two processions were believed to have taken place previously and none since 1834 was not only questionable (because the destruction of the records during the 1857 revolt prevented the Commissioner from being certain of these facts), but it was also to deny the Saraogis their right to define what was significant to them. The

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid

<sup>16</sup> D.S.A.: 1/1863/D.C.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid

<sup>18</sup> Ibid

*rathjattras* had not taken place after 1834 because they had been banned; they had not been allowed to become a normal or regular occurrence. The Commissioner was upholding an earlier decision to deny the Saraogis access to Delhi's public spaces based on a lack of proof of historical precedent and the perceived soundness of earlier colonial policies.

The Commissioner went on to describe the Saraogis *rathjatra* as detestable and offensive to the other 'far more numerous' Indians and as having evil effects, thereby undeserving of access to Delhi's public spaces. The Saraogis were a hated minority group and therefore did not have the same rights as the Hindus and Muslims who regularly carried out their processions during Muharrum and Dassehra, because they were considered normal occurrences. By citing the ban on the Orange Processions in Ireland, the Commissioner was at pains to stress that religious intolerance was not the reason for the ban on the *rathjatra*. By repeatedly warning of the threat to public order posed by these extraordinary and unnecessary processions and by representing the Saraogis as a cunning and unreasonable group of people, the Commissioner constructed a discourse that was to dominate the colonial state's stance towards the Saraogis for many years to follow and continue to deny them access to public life in Delhi. The state was portrayed as the tolerant and fair defender of the peace of the city and the Saraogis as an inconsequential, devious minority with an unusual, unsubstantiated and potentially dangerous agenda. The spatial exclusion of the Saraogis was crucial to maintaining public order in Delhi. Public order was the stated priority of the government in Delhi, not the rights of the Saraogis. Religious tolerance was superseded by considerations for public order.

The Saraogis did not accept the decisions of Commissioner Hamilton. They began a sustained and concerted campaign in order to acquire legitimacy and recognition and

to carve out a place for themselves in Delhi's public life. They orchestrated their campaign by relentless petitioning directed at various levels of the imperial government. When they were unsatisfied with the response of the Delhi government, they addressed their concerns to the Government of India. As I proceed, I show that it was not only the content of the Saraogis discourses, but also their discursive strategies and their relentless petitioning that would prove to be very effective.

In response to the banning of the processions by the Commissioner of Delhi in April 1863, Rickhoo Lall, who was the primary representative for the Saraogis in the early campaign, submitted a petition to the Secretary of State for India, in London:

We beg to submit our deplorable case for your favourable consideration and orders as we find none from whom we could seek a redress of our grievances.

The Commissioner of [Delhi] has prohibited our [*rathjatra*] festival in that city which was usual with us, for the sake of some wealthy persons who being jealous of our Religion have recommended for the discontinuance of the same, but [we] would take the liberty to state that our religious car [...] is paraded in every large town and city throughout India but no one can interfere with the religious performances owing to the arrangement of the district officers.

We had drawn our car even at [Delhi] through the several markets situated therein on several occasions and when the late King was residing in [the] city and had the practice which is prevalent among us been hurtful to the inhabitants the matter would have been forthwith brought to the notice of the authorities. But the same never then proved to do any harm to the people of the City and we would instance that the festival is observed in almost all places but in none of them its



discontinuance was recommended by any one and while the custom is in no way harmful to the people of [other] cities it seems quite strange that the decisions of the Commissioner thereof may prove to be an example to the inhabitants of other places who may likewise allure the officers of their districts. If similar orders as those passed by the Commissioner of [Delhi] be established in other districts a general grievance among the people of our castes living in the different places will [...] result.

Under the above circumstances we humbly and respectfully solicit that your honour will be kind enough to issue the necessary orders to the Commissioner of [Delhi] to withdraw his order at once and not to interfere into our religious matters by the saying of others and make such arrangements as was previously done by his predecessors.<sup>19</sup>

The Saraogis' initial concerns were with identifying themselves as a legitimate religious group with the right to participate in public life in Delhi and they were prepared to take their case to the highest levels of government in order to have the Commissioner's ban overturned. For the Saraogis, there was a nationwide as well as a historic precedent for their religious procession. The Saraogis were participants in urban spaces all over India. Their *rathjattras* were a regular occurrence and they had never posed a threat to public order. In their petition, the Saraogis were responding directly to the public order concerns of the state and contesting the Commissioner's constructions of the Saraogis' identities and of their processions. While the Commissioner had been at pains to describe the *rathjattras* as unusual and dangerous, the Saraogis emphasised their ordinary and benign nature. To them, the objections of the Hindus were unreasonable and motivated by jealousy and they feared that the ban on their processions in Delhi

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<sup>19</sup> D.S.A.: 1/1863/D.C.

might pose a threat to their counterparts' celebrations in other parts of India. The Commissioner insisted on the exclusion of the Saraogis from Delhi's main public spaces while the Saraogis laid claim to them. The Saraogis believed that the state authorities had the responsibility to protect their rights and they interpreted the Commissioner's decision as interference in their religious matters. The issue of their rights became central to the Saraogis campaign to gain permission for their procession. Delhi's public spaces were being defined by the competing cultural and political claims. The Commissioner, the Saraogis and the Vaishnus were all mobilising specific identity assumptions about each other and themselves in order to justify their respective claims.

The Secretary of State for India responded to Rickhoo Lall's petition by upholding the Commissioner's decision. In 1864 Rickhoo Lall was informed that all petitions would have to go through the local government. Between 1864 and 1870, the Saraogis were unsuccessful in obtaining permission to hold their annual *rathjatra*.

The colonial authorities were not unanimous in their opposition to the Saraogis *rathjatra*. In June of 1867, the Secretary to the Government of Punjab expressed to the new officiating Commissioner of Delhi that:

To issue a general order for the prohibition of the [*rathjatra*] procession, which is allowed in many cities in India simply, because it is distasteful to the members of another Sect, would in his Honour's opinion be inconsistent, with the terms of Her Majesty's Proclamation, whereby the British Government has pledged itself not only to tolerate but to protect subjects in the reasonable exercise of religious observances. Those to whom the procession of the [*rathjatra*] is distasteful, should

learn to evince towards others, the religious tolerancy which is shown towards themselves.<sup>20</sup>

The Secretary to the Punjab Government was only one of several colonial officers who would express their concerns with Commissioner Hamilton's report and their empathy with the Saraogis' requests. He was of the belief that Her Majesty's Proclamation citing religious tolerance should be enforced in regard to the Saraogis' *rathjatra*. This ran counter to the narrative propounded by Commissioner Hamilton in which religious tolerance was superseded by concerns for public order. There existed, therefore, conflicting colonial discourses over the rights of access to public spaces for religious celebrations. Officers at different levels of the colonial government had different opinions. While Delhi's Commissioner depicted the Saraogis' *rathjatra* as an extraordinary inconvenience in Delhi's public spaces, the Punjab representative saw it as a legitimate public expression of religion consistent with the law. The Saraogis also believed that their *rathjatra* was a legitimate way to participate in Delhi's public spaces. These concerns with public order, tolerance and rights continued to pervade the negotiations between the Saraogis and members of the colonial government and the Saraogis continued to insist on their right to equal treatment and to demand tolerance towards their religious festivals in persistent and increasingly persuasive ways.

#### 4.4 The Saraogis' rights

On August 4<sup>th</sup> 1870, Rickhoo Lall submitted a petition to the Deputy Commissioner on behalf of the Saraogis. In the petition, he cited the supportive stance of the Secretary to the Government of Punjab and reiterated that the Saraogis were still awaiting a response

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<sup>20</sup> D.S.A.: 1/1878/D.C.



to their petitions. He asserted that Saraogis in other cities of India, namely Calcutta, Benares, Allahabad, Agra, Saharanpur, Ajmer, Jaipur and Gwalior were all allowed to carry out their annual procession. Moreover:

The cart of our God Parusnath has been drawn every year at Delhi thro' Dharumpoora, Badewarah, Buzar-Oordoo, Seth-Ka-Koocha, where shops and Houses of Brahmins and other people are situated. Before the Munity our cart was drawn in Mr Neif's time thro' all the Markets of [Delhi] and after Mr Cooper's time on the 25<sup>th</sup> of April the Cart ran from Seth-ka-Koocha to Ajmere Durwaza thro' Jama Masjid, Kaza-Ka-house, escorted only by 8 constables without any disturbance [or] mischief of any kind whatever. The objections raised by some [Delhi] people to put a stop to this religious practice of ours have emanated from envy and nothing else and consequently their objections should be set aside.

Under Her Majesty's Proclamation dated 1<sup>st</sup> November 1858 everyone ought to be allowed to enjoy his religion in the manner ordained [...] and in the way he deems best. On what grounds then can the [Delhi Vaishnus and Shivites] come forward to put a stop to our [*rathjatra*] when they themselves do the same with their God in a certain part of the year [...] <sup>21</sup>

Rickhoo Lall went on to state that, in Aligarh, the Magistrate had made enquiries from the authorities of several cities over whether a separate route, rather than one going through the main streets, was being used for the *rathjstras* and he found that there was no such exception being made. The *rathjatra* had also been allowed by the Gwalior authorities, and one of the officers in Gwalior had stated that 'if such objections would be listen[ed] to [Muslims] and [Hindus] and the different sects among them would raise

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<sup>21</sup> D.S.A.: 1/1863/D.C.

objections against the religious performances of one another and in such a case the Proclamation of Her Majesty would become null and void.’<sup>22</sup> A resolution of the North West Provinces government in 1862 allowed the *rathjatra* in Allahabad, even though there was a large Vaishnu population. Rickhoo Lall submitted authenticated documents to prove his assertions.

The Saraogis had developed their arguments and strategies considerably in this latest petition. They were more temporally and spatially specific in their inclusion of details such as the dates, routes and locations of previous *rathjstras* in Delhi. In addition, the Saraogis provided documented evidence of *rathjstras* taking place without any objections in other towns and cities in India where Vaishnus lived. The Saraogis were doing their research and presenting specific details that they hoped would substantiate their claims to Delhi’s public spaces. In an important move, they made references to Her Majesty’s Proclamation which spoke of religious tolerance and equal rights for all. They saw the ban on their *rathjatra* in Delhi as a denial of their rights to practice their religion publicly as the Hindus and Muslims were doing during Dassehra and Muharrum. The reference to Her Majesty’s Proclamation became an enduring and influential feature of the Saraogis’ strategies. They were claiming entitlement under a colonial law, thereby engaging with and employing the discourses of the colonizers to lay claim to Delhi’s public spaces. They were emphasising their similarity to other Indians and colonial citizens; they wanted similar rights as the Hindus and Muslims when it came to their religious public procession.

By emphasising that *rathjstras* were passing through the main streets in other towns and cities in India, the Saraogis were laying claim to Delhi’s main public spaces. They wanted to be a visible urban group that was central to the city’s public life. I explore

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid

this further in Chapter Five, when I describe the actual route of the *rathjatra*. In this endeavour, the Saraogis were not only competing with the colonial officials who wanted to control the city's spaces in order to ensure public order, but they were also competing with the claims of Hindus who wanted to exclude the Saraogis. From the Saraogis' petitions, it is clear that the conflicts between the Saraogis and the Hindus arose from local circumstances, as they were keen to stress that their processions were taking place all over India, through spaces that were populated by Hindus without any problems arising.

Delhi's public spaces were essential to the various inhabitants for specific reasons. For some colonial officials, they were significant for the maintenance of public order and therefore the definition of the colonial government. For the Hindus and the Saraogis they were not only essential for the expression of religious community but they were also the sites through which personal and political competitions were expressed. Local business and communal rivalries between Hindu and Saraogi leaders were being manifested in competitions over access to public arenas in the city. Delhi's spaces were not only the mediums through which identities, communities and government were being defined; they were themselves being defined by competing and conflicting claims and counter claims.

When the Saraogis did not receive a reply to the last petition from the Deputy Commissioner they submitted another one to the Secretary to the Viceroy and Governor General of India in Calcutta in which they repeated all their previous arguments but this time they also questioned why the Vaishnus and Khattris, whose objections were motivated purely by enmity, had not been prosecuted under sections 147 and 296 of the Indian Penal Code which stated that 'Whoever voluntarily causes disturbance to any assembly, lawfully engaged in the performance of religious worship or religious



ceremonies shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to one year or with fine or with both'.<sup>23</sup> They had used Her Majesty's proclamation to emphasise their entitlement to participate in Delhi's public spaces and they were now using the Indian Penal Code to call for the punishment of the Hindus who were objecting to their processions. The Saraogis were appealing to colonial ideologies in order to emphasise their entitlements and rights. They employed official colonial discourses in the hope that they would resonate with the colonial officials.

As well as employing skilful discursive strategies the Saraogis were relentless in their lobbying of the colonial authorities. The Saraogis made their case before all levels of the colonial government, from the Deputy Commissioner in Delhi to the Secretary of State in London. In December 1970, they applied for permission directly to the District Superintendent of Police at Delhi to take their *rathjatra* in public procession through the streets of Delhi to the neighbouring town of Hastinapoor. The Delhi police were responsible for giving immediate permission for the processions as they were the ones who were directly responsible for the regulation of public space activities. The District Superintendent granted permission for this procession, without the knowledge of Delhi's Commissioner, who, upon learning of it, refused to allow the return journey of the procession through the streets of Delhi back to the Saraogi temple in the city, saying that:

This is a question of public policy. The general rule to be followed is that public processions of all kinds interfere in streets with the public convenience and therefore are not allowed without good cause shown. And as regards religious processions the case is stronger because people of adverse religious opinions are

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<sup>23</sup> D.S.A./1/1863/D.C.

(however unnecessarily) offended. The religion did not require such a proceeding [...]<sup>24</sup>

A very thorough investigation was carried out into the District Superintendent's decision to allow the procession and it was recommended, by the provincial government, that all those responsible for permitting the procession should be held to account and even dismissed from their posts. The defence of the police officers was that they were unaware of the nature of the procession and that the orders had been obtained fraudulently from the Assistant District Superintendent by vernacular writers in the office who had submitted the requests for signature without reading them properly to him. Moreover, the Inspector of the City Police claims that he was ignorant of any order forbidding the procession. This matter concluded with the Inspector being removed from his post and severe cautions being issued to the other officials involved.

In his latest move, the new Commissioner of Delhi had reiterated the arguments of Commissioner Hamilton's 1863 report. The spatial exclusion of the Saraogis was maintained on the basis that it was an unnecessary occurrence that interfered with public order and caused offence to other Indians. As I have specified thus far, concerns with public order dominated the government's stance on this matter. According to the Commissioner, the objections by the Hindus only served to bolster the government's stance. The Saraogis, for their part, had been successful in obtaining permission by manipulating the information presented to the police while benefiting from the fact that the Inspector had not been well informed of the precedents in the Saraogis' case. Fed up with the refusals from the upper echelons of the colonial government, they had approached the police directly. The Saraogis were positioning themselves in several

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid

discursive networks, in relation to all levels of the colonial government, from the India Office in London to the local police officers.

Throughout 1971, the Saraogis continued to submit petitions to the Secretary of State in London and to the Deputy Commissioner in Delhi. They reiterated all their previous arguments incessantly. In February 1871 they wrote:

For what purpose do the [Vaishnus] and [Khatris] interfere in matters regarding our religion when we do not meddle with them at all [...] both parties are not equal, as the [Vaishnus] and [Khatris] are at liberty to hold their religious matters at any time they like while we are deprived of our right which pleases them as it [is] a custom in every caste to hate to see the religious rites of others.

Therefore I hope you will do something yourself in this case then it may be settled easily, as on the Public Road no one has such power to interfere in the religious matter as the Local authorities.<sup>25</sup>

Whereas previously they had simply made reference to Her Majesty's Proclamation of 1858, this time they quoted it at length:

We declare it to be our Royal will and pleasure that none be in any wise favoured, none molested or disquieted, by reason of their religious faith or observances; but that all shall alike enjoy the equal and impartial protection of the law; and we do strictly charge and enjoin all those who may be in authority under us, that they

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid



abstain from all interference with the religious belief or worship of any of our subjects on pain of our highest displeasure.<sup>26</sup>

The Saraogis petitions became more urgent and provocative in tone. They became more explicit in their criticism of the Vaishnus and the Khattris, now accusing them of being motivated by hate. For the Saraogis, their competition with the Hindu groups was a significant aspect of their campaign. They were incensed that it was the objections of the Hindus, who were citizens just like them that were excluding them from public life in Delhi. Cultural and political conflicts between Indian groups were, as Freitag (*ibid*) also shows, expressed through claims to public spaces. The Indians also had to compete with the claims of the colonial state, which was preoccupied with concerns for public order.

The Saraogis had developed their campaign considerably. They had provided evidence of the tolerance of their processions in other parts of India and previously in Delhi and they had substantiated their arguments by claiming equal rights under Her Majesty's Proclamation. The conflicts between the Saraogis and the Hindus were of a local nature; however, the Saraogis turned them into a considerably larger issue of religious tolerance and rights. By engaging with colonial officers at all levels of the government and appealing to colonial laws, the Saraogis had created a diversified campaign defined by persuasive and repetitive discourses and discursive strategies in order to compete with the claims of the Hindus and members of the colonial government. They were determined to assert themselves as a significant part of Delhi's civic landscape. The urban public arena was central to their identity as a legitimate community, with rights equal to other Indian groups. Their active participation in the construction of Delhi's public spaces in this way contributed considerably to the erosion of the dominant

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<sup>26</sup> D.S.A.: 1/1863/D.C.

colonial constructions of public space and of the Saraogis' identities. In the following section I describe how the Saraogis gradually succeeded in shifting the colonial state's stance as well as shifting their own identities from subjects with unequal rights to citizens with equal access to Delhi's public spaces.

#### **4.5 Shifting the dominant colonial narratives**

Privately, some government officers continued to express that the Saraogis should be able to hold their religious processions. In a letter to the Commissioner of Delhi in March 1871, the Deputy Commissioner stated that he did not understand the prohibition against Saraogi processions in Delhi when similar processions were taking place in the other towns of Northern India and he also felt that the Vaishnus had exaggerated the obscenity of the Saraogi gods after visiting a Saraogi temple and seeing the images himself and finding nothing untoward.<sup>27</sup> Some months later, the new Deputy Commissioner wrote to the Commissioner recognising that there had been disputes between the Vaishnus and the Saraogis for many years in Delhi; however, these bad feelings did not exist elsewhere in northern India. He believed that this animosity originated in the refusal of the Saraogis to give their daughters in marriage to Vaishnu families in Delhi. He also debunked the Vaishnus claim that the images of the Saraogi gods were naked and therefore obscene.<sup>28</sup> The views of the two Deputy Commissioners on the validity of the Saraogis' claims and the misleading exaggerations of the Hindus now formed the basis of a different colonial narrative that was to counter the public order narrative.

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<sup>27</sup> D.S.A.: 1/1878/D.C.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid

On the 15<sup>th</sup> August 1871, Rickhoo Lall, on behalf of the Saraogis, wrote to the Deputy Commissioner of Delhi requesting that ten printed copies of the Indian Penal Code Section 296, which he had enclosed with his letter, be distributed for the ‘enlightenment and guidance of the people of [Delhi] who are unacquainted with the orders of Her Majesty the Defender of the Faith and have zealous objections in our religious matters’.<sup>29</sup>

In September 1871 the Lieutenant-Governor of Punjab, issued a general notice to all his local governments containing the following declarations:

The British Government has in no way changed or abandoned the principles which it declared on the annexation of the Punjab, should govern its policy. That policy has been and is to-day to consider all creeds and religions equal before the law; to secure to each individual the right of following the undisturbed practices enjoined by his faith; and to impost upon all no further restraint than is demanded by consideration of the convenience and welfare of the entire community [...]

It must also be well understood that the principles once asserted by the Government will be maintained absolutely and that no opposition to what it has declared the law will be tolerated. The Government regards all its subjects, of whatever race or sect with equal favour, but any class or sect setting itself in opposition to the law and defying constituted authority will meet with inevitable punishment.<sup>30</sup>

There were now more colonial discourses as well as Saraogi discourses about religious rights. Although this notice had not been issued specifically in response to the Saraogis case, the Saraogis interpreted it as a further endorsement of their campaign to practice

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid

<sup>30</sup> Ibid



their religion publicly in Delhi. They included the notice in a petition that they sent to the Commissioner of Delhi. Between the 25<sup>th</sup> of October 1871 and the 19<sup>th</sup> of October 1872, Rickhoo Lall sent eighteen more petitions on behalf of the Saraogis to the various government officers, from the Deputy Commissioner of Delhi all the way up to the Secretary of the Viceroy and Governor General in Calcutta in which he repeated many of the arguments that he had made in previous petitions and frequently referred to Her Majesty's Proclamation and Section 296 of the Indian Penal Code.

In February 1872, the Deputy Commissioner recommended to the Commissioner that a meeting be arranged between the Vaishnus and the Saraogis in order to resolve their personal differences over the apparent obscenity of the Saraogi gods, inter-marriage and inter-feasting. He also stated, as did former Deputy Commissioners that if the Saraogi *rathjatra* was allowed in other cities, he saw no reason why it was still banned in Delhi.<sup>31</sup>

Shortly after, the Saraogis wrote another letter to the Deputy Commissioner saying that they regretted that the Vaishnus and Khattris alone 'are at such a liberty that they do anything whenever they like [...] while we being the subjects of the same British Government as well as they are be prohibited even to perform our usual religious ceremonies'.<sup>32</sup> They added that, previously, when there were clashes between Muslims and Hindus during the celebrations of their respective festivals, the government did not interfere by banning the celebration of their festivals, instead 'both parties are enjoying in peace under the protection of the Government'.<sup>33</sup> In an effort to bolster their campaign, the Saraogis hired an English barrister to represent their case to the British government.

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<sup>31</sup> D.S.A.: 1/1878/D.C.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid

<sup>33</sup> Ibid

The following month, the Saraogis wrote to the Deputy Commissioner<sup>34</sup> yet again, asserting that there were several members of the colonial government who had declared their support for the Saraogis' campaign. They also made reference to a newspaper article from a vernacular newspaper, the *Oudh Akbar* of the 21<sup>st</sup> of May 1872, in which the new Governor General of India, Lord Northbrook, proclaimed that the colonial state should not interfere in the religious affairs of the Indians. The Saraogis claimed that the objections by the other Hindus were at the behest of a Hindu called Rammi Mall, who was motivated purely by jealousy and spite. When they still had not received a favourable response to their demands, they sent another petition in November 1872 in which they asserted that the Saraogis procession had 'immemorial custom to support it'<sup>35</sup> and that:

no popular excitement of a serious or dangerous kind need be caused by the said Procession; and the possibility of any disturbance can be averted by simple and effectual police arrangements; [...] it is respectfully submitted that to disallow the said Procession would appear in the estimation of those concerned and the public generally a departure from that policy of toleration which is eminently the policy of the British Government and would also appear to be the introduction of what the natives of this country thought was impossible under the British Rule – viz a policy that does not consider all creeds and religions equal or secure to each individual the right of following undisturbed the practices enjoined by his faith.<sup>36</sup>

The Saraogis were explicitly accusing the British Government of unfair treatment. There was an increasing boldness in the tone of their assertions. The state was being

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<sup>34</sup> D.S.A.: 1/1863/D.C.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid

<sup>36</sup> Ibid

blatantly intolerant of a religious procession that had taken place previously in Delhi and regularly took place all over India and the Hindus were jealous and spiteful. I have reconstructed the repetitive arguments of the Saraogis in order to show how thoroughly they engaged the colonial state in the process of gaining access to Delhi's public spaces and how determinedly involved they were in the construction of those spaces. To this end, they insisted on the legitimacy of their religious processions and maligned the Hindus who opposed them.

In January 1873 the Deputy Commissioner refused to discuss the matter any further and his decision was backed up by the Commissioner of Delhi who issued instructions that he would not 'sanction or recommend Government to sanction any departure from the rule heretofore fixed on good and valid grounds which have nothing whatever to do with religious intolerance or persecution'.<sup>37</sup> The Commissioner was further supported by the Secretary of State for India at the India Office in London that he would not interfere on behalf of the Saraogis in their favour because 'questions connected with the preservation of the public peace should be dealt with by the Local Governments and administrators under the Superintendence and control of your Excellency in council'.<sup>38</sup> Following this, the Saraogis were informed by the Commissioner of Delhi that all further communication from him would be returned.

The Saraogis had built up a very solid case. While their assertions had convinced some Delhi and Punjab colonial officers and were supposedly supported by colonial laws, the colonial discourses of public order still outweighed all other arguments. While the Delhi authorities continued to insist that the ban on the Saraogi processions was motivated purely by concerns for public peace and had nothing to do with religious intolerance, the Saraogis were convinced that public order could easily be maintained by the Delhi

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<sup>37</sup> D.S.A.: 1/1863/D.C.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid



police and that it was the religious intolerance of the state and the Hindus that was denying them access to the public spaces. Even when, in June 1873, the Secretary to the Government of India informed all the provincial governments of India that the Viceroy had left in the hands of the Chief Magistrates 'the responsibility for taking on these as on all other occasions, the steps necessary to prevent danger to human life or safety [and that the] the Criminal Procedure Code invests them with full authority to use, and to insist on other people using, every requisite precaution'<sup>39</sup> during a *rathjatra* procession, the ban on the Saraogis' procession remained in force in Delhi.

Almost two years later, the Saraogis had still not obtained permission for their *rathjatra*. In March 1875, the Saraogis petitioned the Viceroy of India. As well as repeating all the former arguments, they enclosed a printed list of *rathjatra* festivals that were being celebrated in Bengal and the North West Provinces 'without any hindrance or molestation'.<sup>40</sup> They added that they felt disgraced at not having the liberty to celebrate their festival when every Hindu and Muslim in Delhi and all over India had the privilege of celebrating their own fairs and festivals. They made the accusation that Commissioner Hamilton's claims in the 1863 report in which he said that the *rathjatra* processions would cause a breach of the peace were unfounded and described the report as 'hasty and one sided'<sup>41</sup> and an interference with the Jains' religion. The Saraogis stated that three Deputy Commissioners had 'recognised the justice of the [Jains'] demand for equal privileges and rights with other citizens'.<sup>42</sup> They deplored the fact that they were barred from enjoying the same privileges as the other Indians in 'the Queens Highways'.<sup>43</sup> They reiterated that the discrimination between the Saraogis and the other Indians had 'created discontent and lowered the sense of justice and impartiality of local

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<sup>39</sup> D.S.A.: 1/1878/D.C.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid

<sup>41</sup> Ibid

<sup>42</sup> Ibid

<sup>43</sup> Ibid

British officers in the estimation of the public [and these facts] are worthy of his Excellency's consideration'.<sup>44</sup> The Saraogis also referred to the Deputy Commissioner's letter of February 1872 in which he recommended a meeting between the Saraogis and the Vaishnus for the purpose of resolving their differences and added that both sides of the argument should be heard in order to come to a solution or 'to stop the fairs and festivals of the objecting parties so that both parties may feel equal pain'.<sup>45</sup> The Saraogis were brimming with indignation at their blatantly unfair treatment. They felt disgraced at being excluded from the public spaces that were being enjoyed by the Hindus and the Muslims. By referring to 'the Queen's Highways', the Saraogis were making explicit spatial claims to the city.

In 1877, the Saraogis received a vital endorsement for their campaign when the officiating Secretary to the Government of Punjab, on behalf of the Lieutenant-Governor, wrote to the Commissioner of Delhi in support of the Saraogis case:

The only question now arising is, whether, there is such danger of public disturbance as to warrant the continued and general prohibition of the procession. Some officers, District Magistrates of Delhi and Commissioners of the Delhi Division, have been in favour of maintaining the prohibition on the ground that it was not an essential part of the Saraogi religion; that such processions have not been permitted with two exceptions, for nearly sixty years; that there is bitter enmity between Saraogis on the one side and orthodox Hindus on the other, and that this being the case all occasions of popular tumult should be avoided; that private processions were already too numerous in Delhi; and that the conduct of the Saraogis, in pressing so persistently for the grant of a concession which it was inconvenient to allow, showed a bad disposition on the part of the sect.

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid

<sup>45</sup> Ibid

These views were in 1863 endorsed by the Punjab Government; but after the lapse of 13 years, the Lieutenant-Governor considers that they may well be re-considered by the light of events since 1863, and after a lengthened period of absolute tranquillity. He is not surprised that the Saraogis so urgently press for the removal of what some of the Delhi authorities have considered an infinitesimal grievance. The fact that a grievance is small or sentimental to the eye of a critic does not prove it to be so to the persons who suffer from its maintenance; and, indeed, grievances which have been termed sentimental by uninterested persons are probably those which have most excited the passions of mankind. So long as any religious sect considers itself to be under any disability, however small the actual inconveniences it may cause, so long will they agitate for its removal, and the Lieutenant-Governor is unable to say that their conduct is unusual or disloyal.<sup>46</sup>

The Secretary had carried out an efficient analysis of the situation. He had reiterated the main reasons for the ban on the processions and explained that the Lieutenant-Governor believed that those reasons were no longer relevant. Moreover, by emphasising that the Saraogis grievances were far from infinitesimal and censuring those who had made them out to be, he had made a very powerful statement. He had accused the responsible colonial authorities of indifference and intolerance. This initiative to consider the matter from the perspective of the Saraogis was a remarkable shift in colonial policy. The Secretary continued:

The question really to be considered is whether the [Saraogi] procession of the god [Parusnath] is so obnoxious, indecent or dangerous to the public peace that the British Government is bound to absolutely prohibit it. After the fullest

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid



consideration, and giving due weight to the arguments advanced by able and distinguished officers of Government on the other side of the question, Mr. Egerton is of opinion that the Saraogi procession is of such a character that the opposition of Brahmanical Hindus is fanciful and only made in a spirit of intolerance and bigotry. The present Commissioner of Delhi reports that the cry of indecency set up by the [Vaishnus] is absolutely without foundation. He has himself seen the idol, and there is nothing whatever to object to on this ground. If this be so, the Lieutenant-Governor fails to see why the Saraogi sect should not have as much right to the protection of the British Government in the performance of their religious ceremonial as the Brahmanical Hindus themselves. The latter must learn to display towards others that tolerance which the British Government shows towards them. The Honorary magistrates of Delhi, in whose loyalty and good sense the Lieutenant-Governor has full confidence, will also be held by him personally and collectively responsible for the preservation of the public peace during the Saraogi procession [...]'<sup>47</sup>

No longer reduced to a problem of public order, or an infinitesimal grievance based on sentimental reasons, the Lieutenant-Governor believed that it was a question of the rights of the Saraogis to celebrate their religious festival on par with the other groups in Delhi. After having made their own inquiries, several colonial officers had discovered that there was nothing obscene about the Saraogis idols and now blamed the Vaishnus of intolerance and bigotry. The Saraogis had gone from being offensive subjects to subjects with rights. This was a crucial shift in which the dominant colonial discourses of public order had been eroded by the Saraogis' and the alternative colonial discourses of equal rights and tolerance. The Saraogis had succeeded in carving out a space for themselves in Delhi's public life by crafting a campaign in which they mobilised

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<sup>47</sup> D.S.A.: 1/1878/D.C.

discourses of religious tolerance and equal rights that became impossible to deny. While public order remained a concern for the colonial state, it was no longer a viable reason for denying the Saraogis their legal right to participate in public religious life. Rather, it was the government's responsibility to maintain the public peace. These important shifts in the identities of the Saraogis, the Vaishnus and the colonial state and their roles in Delhi's public spaces had been brought about by a complex series of claims and exchanges. Delhi's public spaces were defined by negotiations between the inhabitants who were motivated by occasionally conflicting cultural and political aspirations and demands that were articulated in complex discourses.

In an effort to improve relations between the Saraogis and the Vaishnus a meeting was held at the town hall in Delhi in 1877 in which the Saraogis agreed, in principle, to grant their daughters in marriage to Vaishnu families and they also agreed to partake in feasts prepared by Vaishnus.<sup>48</sup> A Saraogi Procession took place on 20<sup>th</sup> July 1877. In the following chapter I describe the negotiations between the Saraogis and the Delhi government over various details of the *rathjattras*, including the composition, route, and timings of the processions and I also describe the extensive police arrangements that were instituted to ensure the maintenance of public order.

#### 4.6 Conclusions

Religious processions were an important facet of community, religion and popular culture in urban Indian life. Public spaces were crucial for the celebration of religion and for the expression of community as well as for the preservation of public order. I have described and analyzed the significance of public spaces for the various citizens of

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<sup>48</sup> D.S.A.: 5/1877/D.C.

Delhi. For the Saraogis, Delhi's public spaces were mediums through which they could assert their identity as a legitimate religious group and channel their competitions with the Hindus and the British. For the Hindus, Delhi's main streets and bazaars were also a theatre of ritual and competition from which the Saraogis had to be excluded. Local commercial, political and social rivalries formed the basis for the conflicts between the Saraogis and the Hindus. For the British, Delhi's public spaces were vital for the maintenance of public order and therefore the operation of the colonial government.

Commissioner Hamilton's assessments in 1863 of the Saraogis and their processions as unnecessary and a danger to public peace ensured the exclusion of the Saraogis from Delhi's public spaces for several years. In his and several of his successors' estimations, the threat posed to public order by the Saraogis outweighed their entitlement to the religious tolerance and rights that had been accorded to the Hindus and Muslims. The Saraogis were an unpopular and insignificant minority and the state was justified in discriminating against them. The colonial state was far from monolithic and unified, rather, it was multi-layered. Several colonial officers believed that Saraogis were entitled to the same rights as Hindus and Muslims and their support contributed considerably to the shift from discourses about public order to discourses about tolerance and rights.

Saraogis were not only determined, but they were also well informed and became very skilled at carrying out a strategic and tactical project of protest against, not only the Hindus who opposed their processions, but also the colonial authorities. The project was replete with concrete evidence and implemented with relentless fervour. Their engagement with official colonial discourses made for a very compelling vision of religious tolerance and equal rights that worked. They positioned themselves in several discursive networks by petitioning people at all layers of the colonial government, from



the local police to the officials in London. They were very successful in that they turned a local conflict into a colonial issue of tolerance and rights. They shifted the debate from one in which they were seen as an inconsequential minority group to one where they were significant citizens with rights. Their campaign also saw an informed public opinion developing in opposition to the state which contributed considerably to changing the state's role in the management of Delhi's public spaces.

Looking at Delhi's urban landscape as contested terrain ensures that we are not only preoccupied with the motivations of the state as a unified whole, rather, we are open to the significance of Delhi's spaces for the various Indian groups as well as for various members of the colonial state. We are not only interested in the social technologies of the British but we are also interested in the discursive strategies of the Indians. The Saraogis were active participants in the production and consumption of spaces in colonial Delhi and they contributed to the shift in the state's public space policies and to the dynamism of colonial socio-spatial and political relations.

## Chapter Five: In the life of the *rathjattras*

### 5.1 Introduction

In Chapter Four I showed that the *rathjatra* was not only a significant religious celebration for the Saraogis, but it was also a crucial medium through which the Saraogis could integrate into public city life. The *rathjatra* was a public space activity that enabled the Saraogis to put their culture on display and to channel their competitions with the other Indian groups in Delhi. When the Saraogis were granted permission to have their annual *rathjatra*, they prepared to carry out a procession that would leave a lasting impact on the city of Delhi and its inhabitants.

In this chapter, I describe the specific discursive and spatial strategies employed by the Saraogis to lay claim to Delhi's public spaces. By describing various details of the *rathjatra*, including the route and the timings, I show how the Saraogis sought to claim the optimum amount of public space and attention in Delhi. I also examine the principal concerns and preoccupations of the Delhi government in regard to the Saraogis' *rathjattras*. I show that the government's previous concerns with public order were superseded by attention to the more technical aspects of colonial governmentality and they were informed by the relationships between the Saraogis and the Hindus in Delhi. I emphasise that, while discipline and control during the processions were indeed priorities for the state, the state was also motivated and influenced by a number of different concerns which were very much determined by local factors. At times it was blatantly concerned with its own authority and at other times there is evidence that it was considerate of the needs of the Saraogis and the Hindus. By analysing the multiple discursive and spatial strategies of the Saraogis and the Delhi government, I aim to

show that the processes by which people defined colonial spaces and participated in them were multiple, complex and always being negotiated.

In the following section I describe the negotiations between the Saraogis and the government over various spatial and temporal aspects of the first *rathjatra* in 1877. I describe the significance of the Saraogis practices and I analyse the government's priorities in urging certain concessions from the Saraogis. In Section 5.3 I describe the constitution and route of the procession, with an emphasis on the policing arrangements in order to examine the government's techniques for managing the procession. Following this, I show how the Saraogis sought to create more opportunities to increase their public presence in Delhi, in addition to their annual *rathjatra*, and I examine the government's responses to these initiatives.

## **5.2 Making an impact in the city and beyond**

The first Saraogi procession involved a series of negotiations between the Saraogis and the government over various spatial and temporal aspects of the celebrations. While the Saraogis had succeeded in gaining permission for their *rathjatra*, they still had to negotiate the terms of that access with the colonial government in Delhi. The Saraogis' relationships with the Vaishnus also continued to play a prominent part in determining their participation in Delhi's public life. The Vaishnus had been the principal objectors to the Saraogi processions and the colonial officials in Delhi proposed a meeting between the leaders of the Saraogi and Vaishnu communities in an effort to improve relations between them. The meeting took place at the town hall in Delhi in June 1877



in which the Saraogis agreed, in principle, to grant their daughters in marriage to Vaishnu families and they also agreed to partake in feasts prepared by Vaishnus.<sup>49</sup>

Following the meeting with the Vaishnus, the Saraogis submitted the proposals for their *rathjatra*. The intended date for the Saraogi *rathjatra* was the 20<sup>th</sup> July 1877 and the arrangements for the procession were negotiated between Saraogi community leaders, the Commissioner of Delhi, the Deputy Commissioner, the District Superintendent of Police and the *tahsildar* (local Indian policeman). The Saraogis proposed that the procession should start from a Saraogi temple called the Harsukh Rais Mandir in Dharampura, a town on the outskirts of Delhi, and proceed via Chandni Chowk and Lahore Gate to an open space outside the city, where the visitors attending the procession would be gathered. They requested that their idol be placed there for worship on the 20<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> of July and be brought back to the Harsukh Rais Mandir on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, this time via another route, passing by Ajmere Gate. Between thirty thousand and fifty thousand visitors were expected to join the procession from neighbouring districts and it was proposed to ‘uncamp’ them on the cavalry parade ground outside the Mori Gate or on the space between the Circular and Qutab Roads (see Figure 1.2 on p. 10)

By proposing such an expansive route, the Saraogis wanted to carry out a procession that integrated the city of Delhi with the outskirts, thereby making as extensive an impact as possible. In her discussion of religious processions in public arenas, Sandria Freitag (1989) describes how these processions served as important ‘integrative links’ (ibid: 131) between the suburbs and the urban centre and between the participants and the onlookers. Most processions would begin in the centre of the town and move through or past key urban markers such as *chowks* and local police stations to a temple, river, or other significant location on the edge of the town or city. The Saraogis wanted

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<sup>49</sup> D.S.A.: 3/1877/D.C.

to begin their procession from Dharampura, then pass through Chandni Chowk which was the commercial and cultural heart of the city, and stay camped outside the city for almost three days before returning to Harsukh Rais Mandir in Dharampura, this time via the Ajmere Gate. By starting from a temple outside the city and proposing two different routes for the outward and return journeys, they wanted to integrate the outskirts and the main city spaces in order to emphasise their importance to the city and beyond. The Saraogis wanted to make a sweeping spatial statement and demonstrate their wide-ranging presence and influence. Moreover, by passing through and occupying so many spaces, the Saraogis intended to integrate themselves with as many onlookers and participants as possible. As Freitag explains, these processions worked to bring ‘onlookers and processionists [together] into a meaningful whole’ (ibid: 133).

In chapter Four I described how the Saraogis insisted on passing through the main city spaces. When, in 1863, their *rathjatra* had been rerouted through a quieter thoroughfare, they complained that they had not been able to go through the centre of the city (see p. 85). In their later petitions, they repeatedly emphasised their desire to pass through the main city spaces such as the Chandni Chowk and Ajmere Gate. The use of urban space was very important for legitimating the status of the Saraogis in Delhi. Most religious processions wanted to proceed through the central bazaars and streets in order to confirm the centrality of their communal group to city life. The assurance of optimum visibility, of and by all, was very important for the Saraogis:

And in India the crowd forms so important a part of the spectacle, that the selection [of the main street] is more justified than elsewhere. The Singhasan pursuing its way through squalid suburbs, or over country roads, does not greatly impress the onlooker; but when the chief street is reached all is changed: the aspect of the houses with roofs, windows, and balconies crowded with spectators, animated the

worshippers, the throng in the streets becomes denser, the enthusiasm increases, the shouts of the multitude round the car are answered by the crowds on the houses, and as amidst the triumphant clamour of voices the great mass of human beings passes up the street, the organizers of the festival feel that their god has been [honoured] and that their management has been a success (in *ibid*: 133).

The Saraogis did not only want to employ spatial strategies to assert themselves in the city spaces, they also wanted to make temporal statements. They wanted four days of worship, which included two entire days for the outward and return processions. Religious processions would typically move slowly so as to allow onlookers to have as much time as possible to observe and participate in the processions. Sometimes a Muharrum procession would take fourteen hours to go only three miles because:

Innumerable stops would be made along the way, perhaps at *sabils* (refreshment stands) erected not only by pious Muslims (including, despite official indignation, a prostitute) but also by cooperative Hindus. Similarly, during the Bharat Milap procession of Ramlila, shopkeepers would interrupt the leisurely procession to “invite the impersonators of the deities into their shops and offer refreshments and small gifts of money” (*ibid*: 133).

It was, therefore, not only important to pass through and occupy as many spaces as possible, it was also crucial to take as much time as possible in order to secure the maximum amount of public attention. The Saraogis wanted to integrate themselves into the city’s spaces and with its inhabitants as comprehensively as possible. However, as I have already shown, the existence of different religious groups in the city of Delhi meant that there were occasionally conflicts during religious processions because the public manifestation of one group’s religion could be objectionable to another group. As



much as the Saraogis wanted to take their own sweet time with their procession, through as many spaces within and outside the city as possible, they had to be careful not to offend Hindus and Muslims with their religious displays. This was a sacred procession for the Saraogis because it carried an idol of their god Parusnath; however, it could be offensive to members of other religious groups. Problems occurred when sacred spaces from different religious groups overlapped:

The shouting and music of a Hindu procession within a certain distance, for instance, would violate the sacredness of a mosque. To prevent this, all revelry, music and shouting had to stop within a specified zone around a mosque. The delimitation of just which space should be defined as sacred expanded continually, however. One administrator regretfully noted that at the end of the divisive decade in Agra, temporary *tazia* stands and *sabils* [refreshment stands] had come to be treated as spaces similar in stature to mosques. Moreover, such space could be vertical as well as horizontal, as attested by the recurring contests between the heights of the tazias and the lowest branches of the sacred papal tree. In these circumstances, then, space could be divisive as well as integrative and did serve to define participants against an “Other” considered outside the community involved in the observance (ibid: 135).

Therefore, as much as the Saraogis wanted to integrate themselves with the city of Delhi and its outskirts as well as with the onlookers, a grand and ostentatious display replete with the sacred space surrounding Parusnath was also designed to distinguish the Saraogis from the other groups in the city. Considering the history of the relations between the Saraogis and the Vaishnus in Delhi, it was more than likely that there would be objections to the lengthy and elaborate celebrations that the Saraogis were proposing (see Hosagrahar, 2005: 75-77 for a short discussion of the spatial politics of

the Saraogis' *rathjatra*). The responsibility to enable the Saraogis to carry out their celebrations while causing as little public inconvenience and offence was assumed by the government.

As I have shown, the approval of the Delhi authorities was required in order to be able to carry out the *rathjatra*. The colonial state, for its part, was still concerned with ensuring the maintenance of public order, however, it was the more technical and logistical aspects of assisting and policing the procession that were its priorities. After the Saraogis had put forward their proposals, the colonial administrators expressed that on this first occasion of the *rathjatra*, after an interval of so many years, it would not be a good idea to have too grand a procession. They proposed that the duration of the procession and ceremonies should be considerably curtailed and that the entire *rathjatra* should all be completed within one day. This was fair because Hindu and Muslim processions during Dassehra, Muharram and Id usually lasted only one day. As I explain in the following section, the government had to design a very comprehensive policing program in order to escort the procession, to manage and police the streets for the protection of the participants and onlookers, and for the overall smooth journey of the *rathjatra*. This included logistical aspects such as the closing of certain roads in the path of the procession and the diversion of traffic. A four day procession would have meant a considerable amount of work for the police, not to mention the disruption to public life in the city. A one day celebration would be considerably easier to manage and significantly less inconvenient to the public.

Stephen Legg (2007) has carried out a thorough study of the methods by which the colonial state visualised and came to know the city of New Delhi. Using Foucauldian theory, he examines the 'technologies of discipline' (ibid: 82) by which the colonial state sought to 'understand the geography of urban risk and to distribute surveillance

and punitive forces throughout the landscape' (ibid). In the early twentieth century, detailed urban diagrams would be constructed to enable the 'disciplinary organisation of space' (ibid: 103), for example, in the case of the *darbar* of 1911 when King George V was received in Delhi and the capital was transferred from Calcutta. The police was an integral part of the disciplining of space. As Legg describes:

The police were involved in policing communal clashes and the annual festivals they centred around. The evolution of police plans for these festivals marked the tethering together of modes of seeing the city, identity assumptions about the city dwellers, and technologies of urban discipline. In anticipating annual festivals incredibly detailed plans were constructed by which the police aimed to exert authority over the city. These plans came together in the 1930s Communal Riot Scheme (CRS), which became the generic diagram of urban discipline that informed the later policing of annual festivals (ibid: 119).

Legg explains that communal policing evolved considerably and even provided a template for instituting 'more extreme diagrams of disciplinary power' (ibid: 120). Delhi's urban spaces were political spaces and 'the distribution of stationary and mobile forces throughout the city sought to make the dark and winding galis of Old Delhi visible, creating spaces of the law and of violence supported by the technologies of discipline and surveillance' (ibid: 147). As I have discussed in the previous chapter, the 1857 revolt and the 1886 riots caused by the clash of the Hindu Ram Lila and the Muslim Bakr-Id celebration had caused the government to become very vigilant to potential causes of unrest. According to Legg, it was following the 1886 riots that a comprehensive programme was established for the policing of religious festivals and processions (also see Arnold, 1986). He explains that colonial authorities also came to depend heavily upon Indian community leaders or representatives to keep order among



their people during religious festivals. Legg insists that disciplining space and restoring order was based on the presumption that the Indian subjects could not be trusted to discipline themselves.

As I discuss in the following section, in the case of the first Saraogis *rathjatra* in 1877 the Delhi authorities did indeed organise a considerable police presence for all aspects of the procession and they did rely on the influence of local Saraogi leaders to guide and chaperone the procession. However, as I described in Chapter Four, the local conflicts between the Saraogis and the Vaishnus were a significant concern for the Delhi government and for the Saraogis. The Saraogis had themselves, in their petitions, requested police escorts for their processions as protection against Hindus who wanted to prevent their *rathjatra* from taking place. Even though a temporary ceasefire had been declared between them, the state had to continue to strike a delicate balance between the two groups. This was similar to the instances when Hindu and Muslim processions or celebrations overlapped. In those cases too, imperial administrators had to try and remain impartial. In the case of the *rathjatra* it was not strictly a question of overlapping rites; rather it was one of personal and commercial rivalries between the Saraogis and the Vaishnus. Now that the Saraogis had been issued permission for their *rathjatra*, the state had to ensure that it was carried out in as orderly and inoffensive a manner as possible. The Saraogis wanted to carry out a long and extensive procession that would make its mark on much of Delhi's landscape and inhabitants; however, as I show, the state proposed a considerably shorter and small-scale procession that would allow the Saraogis to perform their *rathjatra* without being offensive to the Hindus and Muslims.

Legg's insistence that the police prioritised the disciplinary organisation of space during religious festivals relates to his research on technologies of discipline in the early

twentieth century. In the case of the first Saraogi procession in 1877, the policing arrangements were not simply about disciplining space and did not operate primarily on the assumptions that Indians could not be trusted to discipline themselves. Certainly, the state preferred a procession that would be more convenient to police and a great amount of attention was paid to discipline in every aspect of the procession; however, I would insist that the government was also motivated by concerns for public convenience, protection for the Saraogis and consideration for the other Indian groups. Concerns with communal conflicts (for which there were precedents) and the overlapping of sacred spaces were very prevalent in the government's discourses. The Saraogis' procession was not being reduced entirely to a matter of disciplining space and maintaining public order. The state wanted to minimise the spatial and temporal impact of the Saraogis' *rathjatra* not only for its own convenience, but also for the convenience of the public, to ensure fairness and in order to provide the best protection for the Saraogis.

In mid-nineteenth century Bombay, for instance, James Masselos (2007) explains that the colonial government rarely interfered with religious processions. However, towards the end of the century and during the beginning of the twentieth century, a series of communal disorders resulted in increased police presence in the Bombay *mohallas* and following a series of Mohurram riots, the police intensified their control in the neighbourhoods and issued strict regulations forbidding the procession of *tazias* and their immersion in the sea during Mohurram festivities (ibid: 308-309). Colonial policing of religious processions was, therefore, a process that evolved over time and was specific to local social and political circumstances. It is crucial to carry out a discourse analysis of colonial documents, as I have done, in order to uncover the complex motivations for the Indians' and the colonial state's claims over public spaces during religious processions. It is reductive to focus on technologies of discipline because the motivations for policing the processions were multiple and complex and

constantly adapting to changing circumstances. Indeed, they differed from procession to procession, from one city to another and from one year to another. Moreover, as Masselos explains, while the government visualised a certain spatial order for the city, the Indians had their own ways of seeing the city or their own 'mental maps, coexisting or superimposed one upon the other, diversely and severally perceived according to person, location and time' (ibid: 284). In the following section I describe the final arrangements for the *rathjatra* that took place in July 1877 in order to show how the Saraogis and the government conflicted, negotiated and even collaborated in the process of laying claim to Delhi's public spaces during the *rathjatra*.

### 5.3 The first *rathjatra*

Following the negotiations with the government officials, the Saraogis agreed that the *rathjatra* would take place on the 20<sup>th</sup> July 1877 and last only one day. As I have stipulated previously, restricting the procession to one day was proposed by the government in the interest of public convenience and of fairness, because Hindu and Muslim processions typically lasted only one day. A programme describing the arrangements for the procession including the route of the procession and the policing plans were drawn up by the Deputy Commissioner in consultation with the Saraogis and sanctioned by the Commissioner. It is important to emphasise that the Saraogis were consulted when drawing up the policing arrangements. The colonial state did not forcibly impose a spatial order upon the Saraogis during the *rathjatra*; they had to negotiate their own access to and occupation of Delhi's public spaces during this procession.



### 5.3.1 The route of the procession

The *rathjatra* comprised a combination of people, animals, and various artefacts including: one elephant carrying a banner, fifteen horses, forty seven flag bearers, men carrying artificial flowers, five *raths* (chariots) with wooden horses and wooden elephants drawn by men, three more wooden elephants, ten palanquins, five bullock-drawn floats, five *palkis* (small carriages), and several musicians playing the pipes and drums. The main *rath* with the idol of Parusnath would be drawn by two bullocks. This entire arrangement would be about half a mile in length. The procession would also be accompanied by the general congregation of Saraogis, except through certain spaces like the Dariba (narrow street leading off Chandni Chowk); I will explain this in further detail below.

The procession would start punctually at six am from the Saraogi temple, Harsukh Rais Mandir, in Dharampura. The route of the procession was described very specifically. It was divided thus into five sections:

- A. From Harsukh Rai Saraogi Temple in Dharampura, to Khuni Darwaza of Dariba
- B. From Khuni Darwaza to Clock Tower
- C. From Clock Tower to Fatehpuri Masjid
- D. From Fatehpuri Masjid to Lahore Gate
- E. From Lahore Gate to Deputy Ganj Sarai (in the Sadr Bazaar, west of the city)

Finally, the *rath* with the idol of Parusnath would be taken inside Deputy Ganj Sarai, where there was a large open space, and it would remain there during the day. During this time, the Saraogis would perform various religious ceremonies until three pm, when the procession would start on its return journey and reach the Harsukh Rai Mandir in

Dharampura not later than seven pm. The *rathjatra* would be returning via the same route, in reverse order. In accordance with the Saraogis' requests, the procession would be passing through Chandni Chowk; however, in order to prevent overcrowding and to maintain the regularity of the procession it was decided to confine it to one side of the Chandni Chowk with barricades erected in front of the principal streets leading into Chandni Chowk. Between the hours of nine am and three pm on the 20<sup>th</sup> of July all car traffic would be kept out of the Dariba and Chandni Chowk and diverted via another route.<sup>50</sup> Chandni Chowk was effectively being reserved exclusively for the Saraogis and their procession on that day. The significance of the Saraogis passing through this main processional space that was also the commercial and cultural heart of Delhi cannot be overstated. It was the ideal way for the Saraogis to affirm their centrality to public life in Delhi. Moreover, by starting and ending their procession at their temple in Dharampura on the outskirts of Delhi, and remaining within the city for several hours of prayers and ceremonies, the Saraogis were integrating the city spaces with the outskirts of the city, thereby asserting their presence and influence within the city and beyond.

Previously, I explained that it was common practice for Indians to be able to take their time with their processions, so as to leave a lingering impression upon the city spaces and its people. One of the practices during these processions was to halt as often as possible. In their initial proposal, the Saraogis wanted to halt their procession in twenty places and allow their musicians to play for ten minutes each time. It was finally agreed that the procession would stop eleven times for five minutes each time. These halts were designed to allow the onlookers to participate in the procession and to secure as much public attention as possible for the Saraogis. However, in order to complete the procession on time, the Saraogis had had to make concessions on the number and duration of halts.

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<sup>50</sup> D.S.A.: 5/1877/D.C.

The government also issued instructions that no music would be allowed before the procession began. A small number of musicians, not exceeding twenty five, would be permitted to accompany the procession through the Dariba; however, they would not be allowed to play any music while in the Dariba. Moreover, only five hundred Saraogis, issued with passes, would be allowed to accompany the procession through the Dariba. The general Saraogi congregation could either watch or accompany the procession along its route, except for when it was going through the Dariba. The Dariba, or Dariba Kalan, was a very narrow bazaar leading off Chandni Chowk. It was a prominent jewellery bazaar but also a symbolic Hindu heartland. The Hindu Ramlila procession typically passed through the Dariba. As well as ceasing all music through the Dariba, the Saraogis had to refrain from shouting the word 'Jai', which was a religious Jain chant, throughout the procession but particularly when in the Dariba. As I explained previously, while the space surrounding the Saraogi procession was sacred for them, it could come into conflict with the sacred spaces in this Hindu area of Delhi. The Saraogis had to cease all revelry and religious chants in order to refrain from causing offence to Hindus in the vicinity of their sacred spaces.

The Saraogis had initially wanted to make arrangements for thirty thousand to fifty thousand guests from outside of Delhi; however, the government proposed that, on account of the monsoon season and the increased possibility of sickness breaking out, it would not be advisable to invite that many guests. It was finally agreed that no more than five thousands invitations would be issued to Saraogis from outside Delhi. It is difficult to determine whether the state's concerns with disease were justified in this case, after all, colonial paranoia about diseases among colonised peoples was often unfounded (see Arnold, 2000). What is certain is that the Delhi government preferred a smaller crowd because it would be easier to manage. This was not only for the purposes



of discipline and control, but, as I have shown and will explain further in the following section, the government was also concerned with protection for the Saraogis, consideration for other Indian groups and general public convenience in the city spaces.

### *5.3.2 Policing the procession*

A considerable portion of the programme was dedicated to describing the police arrangements. The District Superintendent was requested to arrange an appropriate police force (foot and mounted) to ‘preserve public order on the occasion’.<sup>51</sup> In addition to a police presence in the town of Dharampura, where the Saraogi procession would commence, police would have to be deployed thus:

1. At the barriers
2. Lining the streets
3. Escorting the procession
4. Look out on house tops
5. Patrols in bye lanes in vicinity of procession route
6. Reserves

Plain clothes police would be out in the streets in the vicinity and along the route of the procession in order to assist the formal policing. The programme contained precise details about the number of policemen that would be deployed at each location. Following is an excerpt from a memo describing the deployment and functions of the police during a Saraogi *rathjatra*:

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<sup>51</sup> D.S.A.: 5/1877/D.C.

As soon as the idol has been placed in the [*rath*] the whole procession will move onwards, the [*rath*] containing the idol occupying the hindermost place in the procession and being accompanied by a guard of 1 inspector, 1 deputy inspector, 30 horse mounted and 30 foot constables armed with carbines. A guard consisting of 1 [Deputy Inspector], 5 Sergeants and 50 foot constables will be stationed at the Hathiwala Kua to prevent crowding and to assist in starting off the procession which will proceed through the Chowri Bazar, Hauz Kazi and Ajmere Gate Bazar, out of the Ajmere Gate and on to Jaisingpura via Pahar Ganj. There would be guards at all those places in order ensure that there would be no overcrowding at Ajmere Gate and to assist the procession to pass through it as rapidly as possible. The entire route of the procession inside the city walls would be lined with foot police and a few men will be posted on the top of the houses and in the route of the procession to prevent persons throwing stones or other missiles at the procession. On the exit of the procession from the city it will only be accompanied by the guard told off [*sic*] for the protection of the [*rath*] which will proceed with it to Jaisingpura, remain there during the day in tents which will be protected at Jaisingpura and return with it in the evening.<sup>52</sup>

The probability of certain Hindus closing their shops as a mark of protest during the procession was discussed. The *tahsildar* believed that a few Hindus might adopt this method of showing their opposition to the Saraogi *rathjatra*. It was decided that the names of such offenders would be noted 'with a view to subsequent proceedings being taken against them, as such conduct would amount to a contempt of, and a rupture to lawful authority and at least likely to lead to a riot or breach of the peace'.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> *ibid*

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid*

It is clear from the memo and that a comprehensive policing plan was put into place in order to ensure discipline and efficiency and to prevent disorder, however, this was not the whole story. The resources of the police were also being dedicated to the protection of the Saraogis and their procession. Considering the local rivalries between the Saraogis and Vaishnus, the extensive police detail had been put into place for the Saraogis' protection, at their behest, as much as for the government's and the public's convenience.

In addition to the police, there would be twelve Honorary Magistrates, all Indian, attached to each section of the procession route. These magistrates would be distinguished by a gold lace shoulder belt. There would also be twenty four Saraogi referees accompanying the procession who would be distinguished by a rose coloured *dupatta* (scarf) worn across the shoulders. These Saraogis would work with the police to ensure the correct direction and pace of the procession and to prevent unnecessary halts and delays. Stephen Legg (ibid) stated, as I described previously, that it was common colonial policy to rely heavily on community leaders during religious processions in order to work with the police in ensuring the efficiency of the processions. In this case, I would not over-emphasise the government's reliance on local leaders. Considering the scale of the procession, the numbers of Saraogis and the numbers of police, twenty four Saraogi referees to assist the police was not evidence of heavy reliance or part of a strategy by the Delhi government to pass on some of its own responsibilities to the Saraogis. Rather, I would insist that this was evidence of the state consulting and including Indian community leaders in the management of their religious processions and indeed their public spaces.

The *rathjatra* was an important religious celebration for the Saraogis and it was also an effective way for them to affirm their centrality to public life in Delhi and to continue



their competitions with other Indian groups. This elaborate procession, replete with revelry and sacred significance was designed to lay claim to Delhi's main public spaces and beyond. The Saraogis had originally desired four days of celebrations; however, the Delhi government would not agree to this in the interest of fairness and public convenience. The colonial authorities were concerned with having a procession that would be disciplined and convenient to police and control. To this end, they organised a comprehensive policing program and they secured certain concessions from the Saraogis such as the duration of the celebrations, the number of halts and the number of guests. However, this was not designed purely to impose a spatial discipline and order because the Saraogis could not be trusted to conduct themselves appropriately. The government was also concerned with protection for the Saraogis and consideration for other religious groups. The Saraogis had themselves requested police protection because of local opposition to their processions. In a city where there were tensions between various Indian groups, striking a balance between the desires and demands of the groups was a delicate process in which the colonial government played an integral role.

Following the *rathjatra* in July 1877 the Saraogis created several more initiatives to increase their public presence in Delhi. They requested permission to perform more public processions, in addition to their annual *rathjatra*, in a climate of increased tension with the Hindus in Delhi. In the following section I examine the priorities of the colonial state and the Saraogis with respect to these additional *rathjstras*.

#### **5.4 Exceptional celebrations**

In August 1877 Lala Mehr Chand, a prominent Saraogi, submitted a petition in order to consecrate a newly constructed Jain temple in Dharampura, just outside the city of

Delhi. He wanted to do so by carrying out a *rathjatra* in May 1878, which would be in addition to the annual *rathjatra*. The temple's construction had been started by Lala Mehr Chand's father in 1870; however, he had died before its completion. Lala Mehr Chand had almost completed the construction of the temple; all that remained to be done was some engraving on the idols in the temple, a process that would be completed within six months. Lala Mehr Chand proposed a procession on the scale of the annual *rathjatra*, passing from Dharampura via Ajmere Gate in the city, to Jaisingpura in Paharganj, a suburb of Delhi. There would be prayers for six days on the open ground near the Talkatora Gardens, also outside the city, with accommodation for twenty two thousand to twenty five thousand guests. On the seventh day the procession would return through Delhi, via Lahore Gate, Chandni Chowk and Dariba and back to the new temple in Dharampura.<sup>54</sup>

This request elicited concerned responses from members of the Delhi government. The District Superintendent of Police claimed that the animosity which existed between the Vaishnus and the Saraogis had increased since the 1877 procession. Apparently, the leading Vaishnus had made efforts to 'excommunicate'<sup>55</sup> Lala Rammi Mal, a prominent Saraogi who had been influential in brokering a temporary peace between the Saraogis and Vaishnus and who had played an important role in assisting the colonial authorities during the Saraogi procession in July. It was clear that if a large force of extra police was required for the ceremonies of the 20<sup>th</sup> July 1877 which had lasted only one day, a much larger force would be required for an entire week of ceremonies.

Lala Mehr Chand had informed the authorities in his petition that extra police would only be required to protect the Talkatora camp during the six days of prayers because there would be a lot of valuable property on that site including religious ornaments and

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<sup>54</sup> D.S.A.: 7/1877/D.C.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid

idols, money offerings to the idols, as well as the jewellery worn by the Saraogi women, who would be decked out in their finest.

Though the District Superintendent believed that the *rathjatra* proposed by Lala Mehr Chand was a customary part of the ceremonies necessary to the opening of a new Saraogi temple, 'there can be no doubt that the ambitious programme proposed by Lala MC is intended by him as an ostentatious display of his private wealth and as a general Saraogi triumph'.<sup>56</sup> Moreover:

It is not unnatural that [Mehr Chand] should seek this to obtain honour among his sect, or that the Saraogis generally should be glad of another opportunity of celebrating a [*rathjatra*] with the usual pomp and display – but it is equally true that the personal gratification of the Saraogis will cause very considerable obstruction of the main thoroughfares of the city during the time the processions last and that the assemblage of so great a number of strangers will create much extra work for the Police.<sup>57</sup>

The District Superintendent recommended that the Saraogis bear the cost of the extra police which would perhaps 'be the very best way of gradually reducing the desire of the Saraogis for these constant and ostentatious processions'.<sup>58</sup>

Following the District Superintendent's recommendations, the Commissioner responded by saying that he felt that 'the celebration on a scale so extravagant or in a manner so ostentatious should not be allowed.' He stated that the ceremonies should be performed with less pomp, that the number of people invited to take part in them should not exceed

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid

<sup>57</sup> Ibid

<sup>58</sup> Ibid



ten thousand and that the procession should take the same route going and returning. He also proposed that the celebration should be postponed until October 1879. While the Commissioner agreed that certain religious ceremonies including a *rathjatra* were customary to commemorate the opening of a new temple, he was 'unable to state which of these are necessary and which can be dispensed with'.<sup>59</sup> He concurred with the District Superintendent that the arrangements required in order to ensure the appropriate conduct of the procession and the protection of valuable property would require the careful attention of police officers for some time before and during the celebrations, not to mention the disruption to public life and traffic that would ensue during the two days of the procession. All public business would have to be suspended for the time the procession lasted which was an 'inconvenience [which] should not be tolerated unless for very good reasons [and] could not be avoided if the District and Police officers are to be held responsible for the efficiency of the arrangements'.<sup>60</sup>

The Commissioner commented that the public religious ceremonies of the other Indian groups did not last for more than a few hours and the city police were usually sufficient for preserving public order. Lala Mehr Chand's proposition was on a considerably more extensive and extravagant scale. He also recognised that the ill feelings between the Saraogis and the Vaishnus had intensified. While the Commissioner did not recommend the outright refusal of Lala Mehr Chand's petition, he favoured a considerably scaled down celebration. He added that Lala Mehr Chand deserved some consideration as he and his father were regular contributors to the funds of the Delhi Dispensary and had, on many occasions, received the commendation of the Lieutenant Governor for their contributions.

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid

<sup>60</sup> Ibid

The District Superintendent consulted with Lala Mehr Chand following the Commissioner's recommendations and they agreed to postpone the *rathjatra* until the following year. In the meantime, every effort would be made to reconcile the differences which still existed between the Saraogis and Vaishnus of Delhi, in which case, there would be no need for an enormous police force because 'such a show of force, amounting as it does to a confession of weakness on our part should as far as possible be avoided on such occasions for the future and personal influence be more largely resorted to, to ensure the maintenance of peace and good order'.<sup>61</sup>

The *rathjatra* was eventually scheduled to take place in January 1879. Rather than starting from Dharampura on the outskirts of Delhi, it would start from the Dariba in the city on the 23rd of January at nine pm reaching the Ajmere Gate at noon and arriving at its destination in Paharganj at one pm where it would remain for three days. The idol would be brought from the temple to Lala Mehr Chand's house where it would be placed on its *rath* and conveyed through to Anar ki Gali in Dariba until it joined the rest of the procession on the Esplanade Road. The idol would stop ten times, for ten minutes each time, between the entrance of the Anar ki Gali and the Ajmere Gate. The return journey would commence at eleven am on the 27th of January and terminate at three pm. On the return journey the *rathjatra* would enter the city by the Lahore Gate, passing down the Chandni Chowk to the entrance of the Dariba. In the city, nine halts would be allowed. The idol would be accompanied by a thousand Saraogis to whom tickets would be issued. The remainder of the procession would once again await the *rath* on the Esplanade Road and then disperse.<sup>62</sup>

Following the celebrations the Deputy Commissioner, in his event report, stated that all the celebrations had passed off quietly. He estimated that more than one hundred

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid

<sup>62</sup> Ibid

thousand people had visited Delhi to take part in the procession, of these about eighty thousand, a large proportion of them women and children, were in camp at Jaisingpura. The police arrangements were admirable and 'reflect the greatest credit on the D.S.P.' while the Indian policemen were 'also very effective in their duties throughout the celebrations'.<sup>63</sup> The Honorary Magistrates of Delhi had attended the procession and assisted in maintaining order in the streets through which the procession passed. The magistrates secured order in the streets, ensuring that the other residents 'were interfered with as little as possible in the pursuit of their usual avocations [and] the alacrity and cheerfulness with which these officers discharged the duties entrusted to their case, deserves to be highly commended [...]'<sup>64</sup>

The Saraogis had carried out a four day celebration in order to mark the opening of their new temple. The government officials had found that it was in keeping with Jain custom to consecrate a new temple in such a manner and the reputation and influence of Lala Mehr Chand had undoubtedly also worked in the Saraogis favour. As the District Superintendent had suggested, the scale of the celebration was certainly intended to be a statement of the Saraogis' significance and of Lala Mehr Chand's status. The spatial and temporal aspects of the celebration, such as the length of the festivities and the proposed routes of the procession, as well as the number of people expected to attend had been calculated, as with the annual *rathjatra*, to have a significant impact. In the end, almost one hundred thousand people had attended the celebrations, considerably more than the government had preferred. The consecration of the temple had to be on a grand scale in order to reflect the sizeable wealth and influence of Lala Mehr Chand and the Saraogis. Delhi's public spaces were the medium through which they were asserting their status.

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid

<sup>64</sup> Ibid



In the case of this procession the colonial authorities were overwhelmingly concerned with their authority and with the perception of their ability to be control. As I stated previously, the priorities of the colonial state adapted to the changing local circumstances. As the tensions between the Saraogis and Vaishnus had increased and as the proposed *rathjatra* was on such a large scale, a considerably larger police force had been required to manage the procession which could have been interpreted as a show of weakness and of the government's inability to maintain public order efficiently. The colonial officials described Lala Mehr Chand and the Saraogis as show-offs who wanted to engage in the practice of one-upmanship. Moreover, in this case, the District Superintendent explicitly stated that the personal influences of Saraogi and Vaishnu leaders amongst their people should be relied rather than extra policing and inflicting the cost of the extra police on the Saraogis was considered a good way to prevent future extravagant processions. While this *rathjatra's* legitimacy was not in question, the scale of the celebrations was. In an atmosphere of increased local hostilities and the ambitions of the Saraogis, the colonial government was blatantly concerned with the resulting added responsibilities. The government had to be seen as being in control and it was keen to place more responsibilities on the Saraogis in the hope that this would act as a deterrent in the future. In the case of the 1877 *rathjatra*, I have shown that the government's role in maintaining order and discipline during the procession was motivated by multiple considerations including protection for the Saraogis and consideration for other Indian groups. Only a year later and under more tense circumstances, the government's role was more explicitly defined by policing requirements and concerns for its own reputation and power. Identity assumptions about the Saraogis and unfavourable interpretations of their intentions were more prevalent in the colonial discourses. Even so, the Saraogis succeeded in carrying out a four day celebration due, in no small part, to Lala Mehr Chand's influence, who was consulted by the government whilst making the preparations for the procession.

The Saraogis continued to seek more opportunities to increase their presence in and occupation of Delhi's public spaces. In September 1877, shortly after Lala Mehr Chand had submitted his application, the Saraogis submitted another application to pitch a tent close to one of their Jain temples in the city, and to move an idol of their god into it and then back to the temple with a musical procession. The Saraogis explained that their existing temple was not large enough to accommodate all the devotees and because there was more space since a lot of houses around the temple had been cleared in the aftermath of the 1857 revolt, they wanted to take advantage of it. They added that this would also ensure more privacy for the female Saraogis.

The Commissioner saw no problem with this request, seeing that the Saraogis had been granted 'the full tolerance to their religion' and he believed that refusal 'would not only be in direct contravention of the views of the government of this province but serve to reopen a sore that the Commissioner of Delhi's late wise and just action in the Saraogi question had now happily healed to general satisfaction'.<sup>65</sup>

Some Vaishnus, however, objected to this proposal by the Saraogis and the Deputy Commissioner expressed his sympathies with the Vaishnus concerns. He saw this move by the Saraogis as yet another unprecedented invention and he expressed frustration at what he saw as efforts by the Saraogi sect to increase public manifestations of their religion in a way that was offensive to the other religious groups. Moreover, they had not submitted their application in time. The Deputy Commissioner proceeded to summon two Saraogis and two Vaishnus to his house to discuss the matter further. Following the meeting, he declared:

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<sup>65</sup> D.S.A.: 6/1877/D.C.

It is quite evident that the erection of a tent and the removal of their idol into it are not an essential part of their religious ceremonies. There are many Saraogi temples in the City near which it is impossible to pitch a tent and the worshippers are able to perform all their ceremonies inside them in a satisfactory and befitting manner. With regard to the size of the temple I believe the Saraogis were permitted to enlarge it some years ago [...] and it certainly is much larger than the tent which I see they have already pitched outside. As for the privacy of their females if men and women can bathe together in the promiscuous manner in which they do there can surely be no harm in their meeting together in the same temple to perform their devotions. As far as I can gather from the records in this office the Saraogis have been permitted to pitch a tent and remove their idol into it on one or two occasions only since the Mutiny – before the Mutiny they were never even asked for permission to do so. Under such circumstances I do not think that they have shown sufficient cause why the indulgence they have asked for be granted to them'.<sup>66</sup>

The erection of the tent outside their temple on a public ground and a procession to move their idol back and forth was designed by the Saraogis to further make their mark on Delhi's landscape. The proposed spatial extension and musical revelry were elaborate and emphatic statements that were interpreted as competitive moves by the Vaishnus. The Vaishnus did not want the Saraogis to increase their public spatial presence in Delhi. While the Commissioner of Delhi believed that a refusal of this request may raise questions of religious intolerance that had only just been resolved in the case of the annual *rathjatra*, the Deputy Commissioner saw this request as an unnecessary indulgence. Rather than allow what he described as an innovative and unnecessary practice, the Deputy Commissioner preferred to maintain the status quo. While the conflicts between the Vaishnus and Hindus over the annual *rathjatra* had

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid



been resolved, this latest initiative upset the delicate balance that the state had been instrumental in brokering. It was easier to deny the Saraogis' requests than to escalate the conflict between the Saraogis and the Vaishnus, which would have been hugely inconvenient for the government. Following the Deputy Commissioner's recommendations, the Saraogis were refused permission to erect a tent outside their temple.

In April 1880, the Saraogis submitted a petition to hold a three day *mela* (fair) and *rathjatra* starting on the 11<sup>th</sup> of the month. This coincided with a large Hindu bathing *mela* on the banks of the river and the police determined that they would not be able to make arrangements for both; the Saraogi *mela* was postponed until the 14<sup>th</sup> of April. When the Saraogis were informed that a three day *mela* would involve a considerable amount of extra police, the cost of which would have to be borne by them, they instead proposed a *mela* lasting just one day.<sup>67</sup>

It can be seen from these additional requests that the Saraogis were determined to increase their access to Delhi's public spaces in order to assert their religious and cultural identity and their significance to the city, and to compete with the other Indian groups. To this end, the Saraogis requested more *rathjstras*, often several days in length, in addition to the annual *rathjatra*. As the Saraogis requests increased and as the tensions between the Saraogis and Vaishnus escalated, colonial officials became increasingly concerned with upsetting the balance between the Vaishnus and the Saraogis and with their own power and authority, although, as I have shown, there were differences of opinion amongst various members of the government. The opposition by Hindus had always been and continued to be an important determinant in the Saraogis'

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<sup>67</sup> D.S.A.: 3/1879/D.C.

*rathjattras*. Local cultural and political rivalries significantly informed and shaped the colonial state's policies in Delhi's public spaces.

## 5.5 Conclusions

The Saraogis, the Hindus and the British imagined and lived in Delhi's public spaces in different ways. Or, you could say, the differences between them were negotiated and lived in Delhi's public spaces. The ways that they imagined and defined the city spaces were determined by their complex cultural and political priorities. In this chapter, I focused on the discursive and spatial practices of the Saraogis and the Delhi government in the context of the *rathjattras*. The use of urban space was very significant for religious processions because they offered an opportunity for groups like the Saraogis to make a lasting impact on the city spaces and on the city's inhabitants. The use of specific spatial strategies such as going through the heart of the city, integrating the outskirts with the centre and using different routes for the outgoing and inward journeys were calculated to ensure maximum visibility for the Saraogis. The use of temporal practices such as the leisurely pace of the procession, the halts and the long duration of the celebrations were all designed to ensure that the Saraogis claimed the optimum amount of public attention as possible so that they could affirm their centrality to city life, and, indeed, their significance to society. However, in a city where local rivalries and multiple religious groups existed, the Saraogis had to contain and restrict their spatial and temporal ambitions and their revelry. Moreover, they had to negotiate the terms of their access to Delhi's public spaces with the colonial state.

For the first *rathjatra*, the government had urged a number of concessions from the Saraogis and had organised an extensive policing programme in order to manage it.

Discipline and control were important concerns for the government; however, the state was also motivated by the Saraogis' own requests for protection because of the hostility of the Hindus. Public convenience and a concern with fairness for all religious groups were also important factors for the government for the first procession in 1877. As the Saraogis requests for additional *rathjattras* increased, however, the government became blatantly concerned with its own authority. As tensions had increased between Saraogis and Hindus, the government was keen to deter the Saraogis from having any additional processions. When the Commissioner sided with the Saraogis' requests to pitch a tent next to their temple, the Deputy Commissioner convinced him that the Saraogis were purposely trying to show off and that their requests were not legitimate. He resorted to maligning the Saraogis' intentions and making them responsible for the extra policing costs. In this way, the government contained and restricted the Saraogis' participation in Delhi's public spaces.

I want to emphasise the different motivations of the Saraogis and the colonial state. The Saraogis were not just interested in the expression of their cultural and religious identities; they were also keen to exhibit their status and wealth and to compete with the other Indian groups in Delhi. While the state was concerned with discipline and control, it was also interested in maintaining a balance between the Saraogis and the Hindus and with mundane matters such as public convenience. The state had to consider the local conflicts between the Indians and it had to make allowances for influential local elites such as Lala Mehr Chand when formulating its plans for the *rathjattras*. There were, therefore, multiple considerations for all the people involved in and affected by the Saraogis' *rathjattras*. By analysing the *rathjattras* in this way, I have shown that the landscape of colonial Delhi was constituted by discursive and spatial practices that were formed through a series of encounters between members of the state and the Saraogis, and which were influenced by a number of considerations. Sometimes those encounters



were defined by the dynamics of conflict, resistance and opposition; however, oftentimes and especially in the case of the Saraogis, they were the product of negotiation and dialogue and, crucially, they were constantly adapting to changing local circumstances. In the following chapter, I shift my analysis to Delhi's public spheres in the context of increased nationalist and violent political activities at the turn of the twentieth century in order to reveal the different dynamics that defined the encounters between the Indians and the British in those spaces.

# Chapter Six: Censorship, control and growth in the Indian public spheres

## 6.1 Introduction

The use of public spaces to construct cultural and political practices and identities and to negotiate competing claims took on an especially volatile turn from the end of the nineteenth century. The political landscape of India was radically invigorated by new public spaces of discourse that accompanied the increase in print media and public meetings. The new print media were spaces of discourse that also created connections between colonial spaces in an unprecedented way. Words and discourses and the spaces where these words were carried and circulated became especially significant for the state and for the Indians, in different and conflicting ways.

In this chapter I uncover the strategies employed by the colonial state to regulate these evolving spaces of public discourse. Underpinning the state's campaign was a law of sedition which ascribed harmful effects to words and language and enabled the state to restrict their production. The state also created a series of press laws and a Seditious Meetings Act in order to control the spaces where these words were written, spoken and circulated. I examine the strategies employed by Indians in Delhi to create and mediate public spheres of discourse, and to engage in social and political exchanges through newspapers, pamphlets and public meetings. I describe how political activists in Delhi created and became involved in networks of activity and discourse with Indians in Bengal and how these connections were facilitated through various public mediums.

In Section 6.2, I provide a brief history of the evolution of the Indian press and I describe in detail the colonial state's early efforts to create broad and comprehensive

definitions of sedition, accompanied by a series of press laws, in order to regulate the growth of the Indian press. In the following section I describe how the state gradually sought to increase its control over the expanding Indian public spheres that followed the creation of the Indian National Congress and the anti-partition activity in Bengal, by introducing a Seditious Meetings Act and more stringent and urgent press laws. In Section 6.3, I describe how Indians in Delhi became involved in national networks of activity initiated by the anti-partition activity in Bengal and how they reacted to and negotiated state interventions in their public spaces of discourse. In the final section I show how a bomb attack in Delhi propelled the state into increased panic about the dangers of Indian public opinion.

## **6.2 Sedition and the press**

During the increasingly volatile political era of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the colonial state became very concerned with regulating the various manifestations of Indian public opinion by inserting itself into and attempting to control India's public spaces of discourse. I show in this section that, starting in the 1860s, the creation and diffusion of information and knowledge through print media and public meetings by Indians was a principal concern of the colonisers. They sought to restrict access to public arenas of discourse by creating laws to define sedition and control the press and public meetings. I show how the colonial state interpreted and discursively constructed the Indians' discourses and activities so as to justify its various interventions in Indian public spaces. I will briefly describe the growth in the Indian and vernacular press before I examine the ways that the British designed and carried out their relentless campaign to circumscribe the multiple Indian public spheres.



Print media emerged as an important medium for the construction and communication of social and political discourses for the Indians after the 1860s. Even before print technology, Indians had been very efficient at spreading information. According to Christopher Bayly (1996), Indian society was a talking, knowing and communicating society during the Mughal era. Specially appointed news-writers would compile reports of current events from around the country and abroad and communicate them to the Emperor and the people, usually through congregations in public spaces. Indians also had access to affective and informal sources of information and knowledge. Bayly insists that the Mughal information order worked because it was rooted in existing social networks of communication. He explains that the growth in the number of printing presses and newspapers in a largely illiterate society was due to the dense nature of social communication which ensured that print culture was a continuation of oral culture and information spread through text joined with public congregation. I would argue that, after the 1850s, print technology radically changed the nature of the public sphere in India. Written media such as newspapers and pamphlets became crucial spaces for the articulation of political and social discourses that were becoming increasingly critical of the state. The railways and the telegraph served to expand the reach of these public spaces of discourse. The use of print communication was not simply an extension of oral communication; rather, it was a powerful innovation in its own right. Not only did print culture and technology create public spaces of political practice or multiple public spheres but it also shaped relations between the British and the Indians and between Indians in local, national and global spaces in an unprecedented way.

The earliest newspapers printed in India were British owned and catered largely to the British community and to the English educated Indian elite. Indian newspapers, owned and edited by Indians, were not produced in any significant number in most parts of

India until the middle of the nineteenth century. English public instruction, which had been introduced in India in the early nineteenth century, had helped to create an educated Indian elite and a professional middle class that was keen to participate in and initiate public debate through literary spaces. The first pioneers in Indian newspapers were in Calcutta, where the Government of India was located, and Bombay and Madras followed soon after (Jagannathan, 1999: 17). By the middle of the nineteenth century, Indian-owned English and vernacular newspapers were being printed in most provinces in India. Although many of these journals were short lived and the circulation numbers were only in the hundreds, the emergence of Indian owned newspapers heralded the era of very mobile and far reaching public spaces of discourse (Ghosh, 1998; Ahuja, 1996; Natarajan, 1954).

Notable newspapers in the 1860s and 1870s included the *Amrita Bazaar Patrika* in Calcutta, the *Tribune* in Lahore and the *Kesari* from Poona. In Delhi, there were approximately half-a-dozen newspapers published from the city during this period. The most enduring of these was the *Akmal-ul-Akbar*, published by Abdul Majid Khan. By the 1880s, there were more than twelve newspapers in Delhi, the majority of which were owned and edited by Muslims (Gupta, 1981: 26). One estimate documents the circulation of Indian newspapers going up from 299,000 in 1885 to 817,000 in 1905 (Sarkar, 1983: 96). The British noted that the Indian press was becoming a significant arena of public opinion on social, religious and, increasingly, political matters. One British missionary, Reverend J. Long, authored a report “Past Condition and Future Prospects of the Vernacular Press” in which he recognised that:

The native newspapers are humble in appearance, yet like the ballads of a nation they often act where the law fails and as straws on a current they show its direction nowhere else to be found. Now and then extracts from details of crime in England

are given to show that there are faults with the English too [...] To each paper is attached a native acquainted with English and translations of many valuable English subjects are scattered through these papers on history, biography, natural philosophy and ethics. Some of the papers have correspondents and at the same time of the Kabul and Punjab wars accurate information was regularly given of the progress of events [...] Whether one looks at the stagnation of village life or the need for rousing the native mind from the torpor of local selfishness, the importance of the vernacular Press is very great [...] If government wish correct news to circulate in the villages, they must use the vernacular Press as organs for diffusing it. The enemies of the English government are not inactive. Already ideas are rapidly spreading in various districts that English power is on the wane, that the Russians are coming to India and would govern it better than the English do [...] (in Jagannathan, 1999: 18).

Reverend Long went on to acknowledge that though the circulation of vernacular newspapers was small, their reach and influence was great as news spread through social networks. Indian-owned English and vernacular newspapers were becoming important spaces for subjecting society and the government to critique. By circulating within and between local and national colonial spaces and by carrying news stories from all over the world, often extracted from British and international newspapers, they were creating important material and symbolic connections between distant spaces. Accurate and sometimes false or misinterpreted news stories were published in these newspapers. Reverend Long's recognition of newspapers as a potential medium for the circulation of 'correct' news was an important acknowledgement of the influence of vernacular newspapers, though there is little evidence to suggest that the state used vernacular newspapers as mediums for diffusing news. It did, however, take the significance of print media as a crucial part of the Indian public sphere very seriously.



An important shift took place after the 1857 Revolt whereby the government kept a very close watch on Indian political activities and became very vigilant to any further causes of unrest, particularly in public arenas. During the 1857 revolt, Indian newspapers and other written media such as hand-written notices and placards had been used to spread political and revolutionary messages (Bayly, *ibid*: 321-323). Surveillance of vernacular newspapers began in earnest after the mid-nineteenth century when 'Reports on Native Newspapers' were created by the colonial state which consisted of extracts from vernacular newspapers from all over India (*ibid*: 341). Following this, the government began a sustained and vigorous campaign to censor and restrict Indian discourses and the public spaces in which they were constructed and circulated, with a combination of press and sedition laws. Immediately following the Revolt, a Press Act had given the state the power to prohibit the publication of any printed matter that it singled out as objectionable. The Act also mandated the licensing of printing presses, which could be revoked as the state saw fit.

The Press Act was only the first step in attempting to restrict the growth of the public sphere in India. In 1870, an act was passed in order to make sedition an offence under the Indian Penal Code. This was largely modelled on the English law of sedition; however, as I discuss below, it was revised in order to adapt it to the Indian situation (Donogh, 1911: 33). This move to define sedition and to identify words and actions as seditious was to be one of the most enduring features of the colonial state's attempts to circumscribe public arenas of discourse. Sedition was described thus:

Whoever by words, either spoken or intended to be read, or by signs, or by visible representation or otherwise, excites or attempts to excite feelings of disaffection to the Government established by law in British India, shall be punished with

transportation for life or for any term, to which fine may be added, or with imprisonment for a term which may be extended to three years, to which fine may be added [...] (in Donogh, 1911: 8).

By this definition of sedition, it became illegal to say, write, signify or portray anything that ‘excited disaffection’ against the government. The state did not define what ‘disaffection’ was. This deliberately broad and flexible definition of sedition left it entirely to the government’s discretion to decide what constituted ‘disaffection to the Government established by law in British India.’ The government awarded itself a rather generous ability to discursively construct the Indians and their words and actions as seditious. With this law of sedition, the government was recognising the significance of language, words and images, and their ability to cause harm. Judith Butler (1997) has asserted that when we claim that language has the ability to injure, then we are ascribing an agency to language (1). She uses the term ‘speech acts’ to emphasise the performative aspects of language. Speech acts are actions in themselves, but they also produce effects. As she puts it:

We do things with language, produce effects with language, and we do things to language, but language is also the thing that we do. Language is a name for our doing: both “what” we do (the name for the action that we characteristically perform) and that which we effect, the act and its consequences (8).

Writing, speaking and signifying were all actions in themselves, but they also had effects. The state wanted to emphasise the harmful effects of words in order to justify taking action against them. The state had the lawful authority to interpret the harmful effects of words and language and to prevent their circulation in public spaces. This law

of sedition remained in force for a period of twenty-seven years, until it was reviewed in February 1898 (see also Chaudhuri, 1898).

In a further move to bolster the campaign against sedition, The Vernacular Press Act was passed in 1878. In accordance with the Act, Indian newspaper owners had to provide a bond for ten thousand rupees in order to register their papers with the Registrar and they also had to agree not to publish any seditious material (Jagannathan, 1999: 116). A security deposit was also required for the first time that could be forfeited if the paper was found guilty of publishing seditious material. Indian newspaper owners had no way of legally challenging these requirements or the confiscation of any material. This Act was debated vociferously by the Indian press and at a public meeting Surendranath Banerjee, creator of the *Bengalee* newspaper in Calcutta, analysed thirty two examples of what had been identified by the state as seditious writing in order to show how contentious and questionable the allegations of sedition were. Bannerjee showed that, in many cases, certain phrases and parts of articles had been taken out of context (ibid). In order to restrict the Indians access to the public sphere, the state had assumed the role of interpreter and armed itself with legislation to enforce its interpretations. What the government had defined as seditious was shown by the Indians to be misinterpreted and false. Indian opposition to the Vernacular Press Act was largely responsible for its repeal in 1881 (ibid).

While the Vernacular Press Act had been repealed, the law of sedition remained in force and was employed several times from the nineteenth century onwards. The most notable case involved the trial and prosecution of Bal Gangadhar Tilak, editor and publisher of the vernacular newspaper the *Kesari* in Poona in 1897 (Donogh, 1911: 42-43). In 1898, an Act was passed in order to elaborate on the definition of sedition because



‘disaffection’ was found to be too imprecise and general as a description. When introducing the Act, the member in charge of the Bill explained:

If a rule of law exists in England we may fairly consider whether it is suitable to India, but the answer to the question must always depend on the conditions which prevail in India. How much license of speech can be safely allowed is a question of time and place. If I smoke a cigar on the maidan it pleases me, and hurts no one else. If I smoke a cigar in the powder magazine of the Fort, I endanger the lives of many, and do an act well deserving of punishment. Language may be tolerated in England which it is unsafe to tolerate in India, because in India it is apt to be transformed into action instead of passing off as harmless gas. In legislating for India we must have regard to Indian conditions, and we must rely mainly on the advice of those who speak under the weight of responsibility and have the peace and good government of India under their charge (in Donogh, 1911: 64).

He went on to say that the Indian Press had become much more reckless since the repeal of the Vernacular Press in 1881 and that the government was faced with ‘a far more insidious and equally dangerous style of writing and speaking’ (in *ibid*: 70). Words and language had immediate and harmful effects in India because of the prevailing political situation and therefore the state was right to legislate against them. As Dirks (2001), Metcalf (1994) and Chatterjee (1993, 1986) have discussed with regard to ethnographic constructions of Indians, the state was emphasising the Indians’ difference in order to justify the creation of laws to restrict the growth of public spaces of discourse. The Indian situation was different and so it required different measures. The state was mobilizing and fixing specific meanings about the Indians that served to endorse its own role as guardian of Indian public spaces.

The new provision to the law, called section 124A made it illegal to say anything seditious about the sovereign ruler or the Government of India and described 'disaffection' as including 'disloyalty and all feelings of enmity' (ibid: 73). Another amendment, called section 153A made it illegal to 'promote feelings of enmity or hatred between different classes of Her Majesty's subjects' (ibid: 165). Furthermore, a new section 505 was also passed which made it an offence to make, publish or circulate any statement, rumour or report that could incite anyone to mutiny, cause fear or alarm to the public and incite different classes of community to act against one another (ibid: 171). 'Disloyalty and all feelings of enmity' was not much more specific than 'disaffection.' Moreover, according to the new amendments, spoken and written words that were capable of promoting hatred, enmity, and even mutiny between anyone and anywhere in the British Empire were also illegal. The public sphere, of which print media was becoming an integral part, was now an important space in which Indians were formulating and communicating political discourses, which were increasingly critical of the colonial state. The effect of the sedition and press laws was to award the state the role of judge and jury with respect to the appropriateness and indeed legality of the Indians' discourses. The emphasis on the harmful effects of words was designed to prevent the Indians from constructing what the state interpreted as seditious discourses and from circulating them in public spheres.

By ascribing so much agency to words and language, the state was exercising 'the force of language even as [it sought to] counter its force, caught up in a bind that no act of censorship can undo' (Butler, 1997: 1). The restriction and censorship of the Indians' discourses through legislation would, as I show in this and the following chapter, only compel the Indians to produce and circulate discourses in more innovative ways. Butler has convincingly discussed the notion that censorship produces speech in that 'censorship precedes the text (by which I include "speech" and other cultural

expressions), and is in some sense responsible for its production' (ibid: 128). Butler explains that explicit types of censorship, such as the press and sedition laws here, are vulnerable because by saying what they do not want to be said, conduct 'a performative contradiction' because they 'introduce the censored speech into public discourse, thereby establishing it as a site of contestation, that is, as the scene of public utterance that it sought to pre-empt' (ibid: 130). For instance, as I described above, when Surendranath Bannerjee publicly challenged the state's accusations of sedition, he was reintroducing the censored speech into public discourse, thereby ensuring its continued circulation in public spaces, something that the state was trying to prevent. Moreover, censorship fails because 'it cannot completely subjectify people through legal means and it cannot circumscribe effectively the social domain of speakable discourse' (ibid: 131). I show in sections four and five that the state's attempts to restrict and censor what the Indians said and wrote with its broad, yet comprehensive definitions of sedition, were minimally successful in strangling the growth of the Indian public sphere; rather, they spawned more public spaces of discourse. Before this, I describe further initiatives by the state to expand and intensify its surveillance and legislation of Indian spaces of public discourse by attempting to regulate public meetings, and by introducing more press laws.

### **6.3 Seditious meetings and violence in the public spheres**

In addition to and in step with the growth of literary spaces of discourse, there was also an increase in the formation of social and political groups. Indians had always organised themselves around the protection of local interests, however, from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, there were a series of initiatives designed to further the promotion of national causes. Following the establishment of The India League by the Ghosh brothers



(who had also founded the *Hindu Patriot*, *Indian Mirror* and *Amrita Bazaar Patrika* newspapers in Calcutta) and The Indian Association by Surendranath Bannerjee (who founded the *Bengalee* in Calcutta), the Indian National Congress was formed in 1885 (Sarkar 1983). While the nucleus of the Congress consisted of members from Calcutta and Bombay, a small contingent of members from Delhi also attended the Congress meetings. The formation of the Indian National Congress represented the first enduring initiative to organise Indians around nationalist issues and its growing influence in the Indian public sphere became of great concern to the state. Shortly thereafter, in 1892, the Indian Councils Act was passed as a result of which Indians had the right to elect their own representatives through approved public bodies and this gave a further boost to Indian journalism (Barns, 1940: 306-307).

Also of considerable concern to the state was Hindu opposition to the partition of Bengal into Bengal, East Bengal and Assam which Viceroy Lord Curzon proposed in October 1905, ostensibly to improve administrative efficiency (Popplewell, 1995: 57). It is widely recognised that this partition was designed in order to reduce the influence of the Hindu Bengali nationalists who were the driving force behind the Indian National Congress (Popplewell, 1995; Dignan, 1983; Sarkar, 1983). The new provinces of Eastern Bengal and Assam would have a majority of Muslims and, as a result, there was vociferous opposition by Bengali Hindus to the proposed partition. Among the measures that they adopted to show their opposition were *Swadeshi* (self-sufficiency) and *Swaraj* (self-rule). *Swadeshi* was an economic movement that encouraged the boycott of British products by promoting the consumption of Indian products and Indian methods of production. Mahatma Gandhi became a champion of this cause, which he believed to be an essential part of *Swaraj* or self-rule. *Swadeshi* spread to several parts of India and was endorsed by the Congress in 1906 (Popplewell, *ibid*: 59). All this anti-partition activity was facilitated and fuelled by the Indian press and public congregation.

Indian newspapers in Bengal promoted *Swadeshi* and anti-partition messages. There was an increase in public meetings in order to share and spread the messages of the Indian National Congress and the anti-partition activists. The colonial state responded to this expansion of the public sphere by extending the legislation against sedition to incorporate public meetings.

The Regulation of Meetings Ordinance, promulgated on May 11 1907, was regularized into the Prevention of Seditious Meetings (and Army) Act of 1907. It was applied to the Provinces of Eastern Bengal, Assam and the Punjab but was also sent to all the other provinces in India, including Delhi and it was left up to the discretion of the Lieutenant-Governor of each respective Province to apply it as they saw necessary, by notification in the local official Gazette. It stated the following:

2. (1) No public meeting shall be held in any proclaimed area for the discussion of public or political matters unless written notice of the intention to hold such meeting and of the time and place of such meeting has been given to the District Superintendent of Police at least seven days previously.

(2) Any officer of Police, not below the rank of an officer in charge of a police-station, may, by order in writing, depute one or more Police-officers or other persons to attend any such meeting for the purpose of causing a report to be taken of the proceedings.

3. The District Magistrate may at any time, by order in writing, of which public notice shall forthwith be given, prohibit any meeting in a proclaimed area if in his opinion such meeting is likely to promote sedition or disaffection or to cause a disturbance of the public tranquillity.

4. (1) Any person concerned in the promotion or conduct of a meeting of which due notice has not been given as required by section 2, sub-section (1), shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to six months, or with fine, or with both.

(2) Any meeting which has been prohibited under section 3 shall be deemed to be an unlawful assembly within the meaning of Chapter VIII of the Indian Penal Code and of Chapter IX of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1898.<sup>68</sup>

Furthermore, it provided the following methods of defining a public meeting:

3. (1) In this Act the expression “public meeting” means a meeting which is open to the public or any class or portion of the public.

(2) A meeting may be a public meeting notwithstanding that it is held in a private place and notwithstanding that admission thereto may have been restricted by ticket or otherwise.

(3) A meeting of more than twenty persons shall be presumed to be a public meeting within the meaning of this Act until the contrary is proved.<sup>69</sup>

This Act was ratified in November 1907 and it extended to the whole of British India in order to ‘make better provision for the prevention of public meetings likely to promote

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<sup>68</sup> D.S.A.: 7/1907/D.C.

<sup>69</sup> *ibid*



sedition or to cause a disturbance of public tranquillity'.<sup>70</sup> It could only be in force for six months at a time but it could be renewed if the local governments deemed it fit.

Public political meetings were becoming an increasingly pervasive feature of the Indian public sphere, along with the Indian press. Legislating against seditious speech acts and heavily regulating the Indian press was not enough, the state wanted to censor and restrict all public political discussion. With this Act, the state wanted to intervene in public spaces by determining which, how many, and indeed if, people could meet; and any meetings that were permitted were spied on by colonial officers. According to this Act, a meeting was 'public' even if it was held at a private place and any gathering of more than twenty persons was a public meeting. According to these exhaustive stipulations, the government could declare a spontaneous social gathering of people at a private residence an illegal meeting if they happened to discuss anything political. The private spaces of Indians were politicized and made public and therefore open to state legislation and control. The state's definition of a 'public' meeting was deliberately flexible and allowed it to enter into the private lives of Indians and prevent the construction of spaces of political discourse. Private spaces were made public and reduced to subjects of colonial governance. With the law of sedition, the Press Act and the Seditious Meetings Act, all obvious spaces of political discourse were brought under the surveillance of the colonial state.

When nationalist activity took a particularly violent turn in 1907, the government attempted to create more explicit links between words and violence. In 1907 there were a number of assassination attempts of colonial officials in Bengal by anti-partition activists. In April 1908 two Bengalis, Profulla Chaki and Khudiram Bose bombed a carriage in which they thought a judge who had been responsible for convicting their

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<sup>70</sup> *ibid*

fellow activists was travelling; instead they killed two English women (Popplewell, *ibid*: 63). This violence represented a new turn in political activity in which a small number of activists adopted extraordinary ways of showing their opposition to the partition of Bengal. These activists broke away from more moderate forums such as the Indian National Congress, which favoured dialogue and using the constitutional process as a way of promoting nationalist causes. Following these bomb attacks, the colonial state passed further press legislation because it blamed the Bengal newspapers for inciting the violent activities. In 1908, the Explosive Substances Act and the Newspapers (Incitement to Offences) Act were passed concurrently. The first concerned the actual making and deployment of bombs while the latter concerned the 'public incitement to murder and acts of violence carried on through the medium of an infamous section of the Press' (in Donogh, *ibid*: 258). The Newspapers (Incitements to Offences) Act covered the whole of British India. Any offending newspaper and printing press could be confiscated and detained and any premises suspected of selling, distributing, publishing, exhibiting or storing such newspaper could be searched and relevant material confiscated. (*ibid*: 259) When they were introduced together, the bills were described as 'inseparable as cause and effect' (*ibid*: 223). Several newspaper editors were prosecuted under this Act, the most notorious case being the trial, in June 1908, of Bal Gangadhar Tilak, editor of the *Kesari* from Poona (who had also been prosecuted for sedition in 1897) and seven presses were confiscated (Barns, *ibid*: 325).

The prevailing laws of sedition no longer sufficed for the new breed of violence that was taking place in Bengal. Words were not only dangerous and capable of producing harmful effects, but they were also the mediums of murder and violence. The people and the press were mediums of violence. In the concluding section of this chapter I show that there were indeed pamphlets that encouraged the use of violence against the colonial state; however, they represented a very small minority of print media. To join

together violent language and explosive substances and to make a special provision to legislate against them together, was to sensationalise and even vilify the influence of the Indian press and therefore to endorse the state's continued interventions in and control of the Indian public sphere. It bears repeating that it was the state that interpreted what was seditious and had the authority to censor and restrict 'violent' discourses. As I have already described, the state emphasised the volatility and differences in the Indian political situation in order to justify the increased surveillance and control of the public spheres.

On the February 4<sup>th</sup>, 1910, another Bill was introduced 'to provide for the better control of the Indian Press' (ibid: 229). When introducing the Act, the speaker proclaimed that 'not only does the campaign of violence date from the change in tone of the Press, but specific outbursts of incitement have been followed by specific outrages' (in Donogh, ibid: 238-239). Under this new Act, security deposits of between five hundred and two thousand rupees and, in some cases, up to five thousand rupees were required and would be forfeited if the printing press was used to print any sort of document promoting sedition or committing an offence under the Explosive Substances Act (ibid: 264). Furthermore, under this Act, customs and postal officers could detain and confiscate any packages brought in by land or sea into British India containing or suspected to be containing seditious material (ibid: 269). This Act reintroduced unpopular regulations such as security deposits that had been scrapped when the Vernacular Press Act had been repealed and it gave postal and customs officers the power to restrict the circulation of material and discourses in the Indian public sphere.

The extensive campaign by the colonial state to disrupt and restrict the growth of Indian public spaces of discourse had been driven by claims that words and language were harmful. The press laws and sedition law had been enacted in order to give the state the



power to control what Indians spoke and wrote about in public spaces of discourse such as newspapers. With the Seditious Meetings Act the state gave itself authority to intervene even in private spaces of discourse, by declaring all gatherings of more than twenty people as public meetings. When anti-partition activity took a particularly violent turn in Bengal, the Explosive Substances Act and the Newspapers (Incitement to Offences) Act created an explicit link between words and violence accusing the press of inciting the public to acts of murder. As public and even private arenas of discourse were emerging as popular and effective forums for the construction of Indian political practices, the colonial state sought to intervene in these spaces by setting the terms of access to and participation in these spaces. It attempted to reduce these complex spaces to matters of governmentality and, in the process, crafted its role as interpreter and judge of Indian discourses in public spaces. In spite of and, indeed, because of the state's attempts at censorship and control, Indians created innovative ways to come together and communicate through the press and public and private meetings. In the following section, I describe the various ways that Indians in Delhi created and expanded public spheres and how they negotiated and thwarted the state's interventions in order to construct and circulate political discourses and become involved in nationalist activities.

#### **6.4 Networks and landscapes of political practice**

In the late nineteenth century, there were several initiatives by Indians in Delhi to participate in the public sphere and to create new spaces of public discourse. Communal concerns were one among many ways that Indians organised themselves. In 1877, a reformist Hindu movement called the Arya Samaj was set up in Northern India, with a branch at Delhi. Some orthodox Hindus and Jains, who were vehemently opposed to the

reforming principles of the Samaj, set up their own groups in order to counter its influence in Delhi (Singh, 1972: 65). The Muslims in Delhi also coalesced around a variety of issues. The Russo-Turkish war of 1877-1878 caused a surge in Pan-Islamic sentiment among Muslims in Delhi. Pan-Islamism was a form of Islamic brotherhood; it represented a series of efforts by Indian Muslims to organise moral and material support for their Muslim brethren all over the world. I will be looking closely at the Pan-Islamic movement in Delhi in Chapter Seven. A special newspaper, the *Roznama-i-Jang*, was set up in Delhi to inform the people of the progress of the Russo-Turkish war and a fund was established in order to provide relief for wounded soldiers and their widows and children. In the wake of these events, a number of religious Islamic schools were also set up at Delhi. In 1887, a Muslim group called the Anjuman Islamia made an appeal to the state for more employment opportunities for Muslims. Maulvi Nasir Ali, the son of one of the founders of the Anjuman Islamia, edited three newspapers – *Nusrat-ul-Akbar*, *Nusrat-ul-Islam*, and the *Mihir-e-Darakshan* which publicly debated the rights of Muslims to slaughter cows and sell beef, among other issues (Gupta, ibid: 129-130). These initiatives to organise around religious and communal issues and the use of the vernacular press to further those ends were important because they created and facilitated the meaningful exchange of information, support and concern. Public spaces of discourse such as newspapers that reported on international events fostered the creation of symbolic and material links between local and global spaces. The public arena was an important medium for the articulation and communication of communal concerns.

The late nineteenth century also witnessed the growth of nationalist activity in Delhi. Local self government was announced in Delhi in 1884 and elections took place in November of that year. Six Muslims and five Hindus were elected to the Municipality (ibid: 119). In addition, a number of small committees affiliated to the Municipality

were set up to tackle specific areas of Municipal work (ibid: 122). Following the formation of The Indian National Congress in 1885, Delhi sent a small contingent of Hindus and Muslims to the meetings. For those in Delhi who were involved in the early meetings, subscription-drives and the political debates 'there was something of an exhilaration of the 1840s as well as the cross-communal and, to a limited extent, cross-racial camaraderie' (ibid: 151). There was also, however, a violent outburst of Hindu-Muslim conflict during Muharram and Dassehra celebrations in 1886 and this outburst of inter-communal conflict hindered the possibilities for the Hindus and Muslims in Delhi to work together to further nationalist causes. There were prominent Muslims, such as Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, who preferred an Anglo-Muslim alliance which, he believed, would serve the Muslims better than a nationalist alliance (Singh, ibid: 73). In 1888, he co-founded the Indian Patriotic Association as an ultra-loyalist organization, loyal to the colonial government rather than to the nationalist cause, to counter the influence of the Indian National Congress (ibid: 74). Following this, there were a number of meetings held by Muslim groups both in support of and against the Indian National Congress (ibid: 72-75). The divisions between Hindus and Muslims and amongst Muslims diluted the influence of the Indian National Congress on the people of Delhi and it was not really until the end of the First World War that it was instrumental in furthering the cause of Indian nationalism. It is important to stress, however, that the introduction of local self government and the participation, albeit brief, in the Indian National Congress created an awareness of nationalist issues in Delhi and thrust the city into national networks of political activity. Moreover, the formation of conflicting alliances and the public competitions between them show that the Indian public sphere was made up of complex discourses and spaces or that there were multiple public spheres in Delhi. I have already shown in Chapters Four and Five that public spaces were important mediums through which people channelled their cultural and political competitions.



Between 1906 and 1908, Delhi experienced a significant increase in forums for the construction of public opinion in response to the anti-partition movement in Bengal. There were a series of efforts by some of Delhi's residents to create links between activists in Bengal and Delhi and to circulate meaningful discourses and materials within and between local and national spaces, to this end. In the wake of events in Bengal, the Indian Patriots Association was formed in the Punjab by Sardar Ajit Singh of Lyallpur and Syed Haidar Raza of Delhi in order to spread support for the anti-partition activists in North India. Syed Haidar Raza had been a lecturer at St. Stephen's College, which was set up by the Cambridge Mission at Delhi. He was a nationalist Muslim who believed in Hindu-Muslim unity. Other political activists of note at Delhi were Lala Amir Chand, a teacher at St. Stephen's School and Professor Raghbar Dayal, from St. Stephen's College. Raza and Amir Chand enjoyed a large following among the students and staff at their respective institutions and they were both active in the Indian National Congress and in local Delhi organisations such as the Ratepayers Association, the Citizens' Union and the District Association, which looked after local issues such as taxation and other municipal matters. Raza also had a newspaper called the *Aftab*, which was soon to be singled out by the government for its seditious content (Lal, 1999).

In May 1907, Lala Rajpat Rai, a well-known political activist and newspaper editor in the Punjab and his colleague Sardar Ajit Singh were arrested and later deported from India under suspicion of creating nationalist agitation in the Punjab and organising a revolt to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the 1857 Revolt (ibid: 118). Their deportation was protested nationwide with meetings including one at Delhi on May 26, 1907 (ibid: 119). That same year, the Seditious Meetings Act had been enforced in Delhi. A private meeting was held on October 21, 1907 at Amir Chand's house in which over twenty people, including Amir Chand and Raza, gathered to discuss their

opposition to the Act. The participants of the meeting also resolved to continue political activity and to resume the holding of public meetings once the present Act expired. As I described in the previous section, a local government was only allowed to proclaim an area under the Act for six months at a time. The Act expired on November 10, 1907. As the Act was not renewed immediately, the Delhi activists resumed their public meetings. They held yet another meeting to protest the arrest and deportation of Rai and Singh and demanded their release or at least a fair trial. To this end, a Lajpat Rai Fund was created and subscriptions were raised. Rai and Singh were subsequently released (ibid: 123). There was a massive turnout to welcome Lajpat Rai when he returned to Delhi in January 1908. He addressed a meeting amidst the chanting of nationalist slogans like *Vande Mataram*<sup>71</sup> and *Bharat Mata ki Jai*.<sup>72</sup> In his address Lajpat Rai pointed to the industrial and economic aspects of the *Swadeshi* movement and encouraged the boycott of foreign products and the development of indigenous industries. Another public meeting was convened on January 24, 1908, this time to protest the increase of house tax at Delhi. Four new organisations were established in December 1907 to further the ends of *Swadeshi* and *Swaraj* (ibid: 124).

Through the efforts of people like Raza and Amir Chand, Delhi was becoming a significant node in the national network of rising political activity. These individuals had been active in local organisations and were now becoming involved in nationalist networks of activity. In addition to participation in the Indian National Congress, they were responsible for organising support for specific nationalist causes such as *Swadeshi* and opposition to the partition of Bengal. They organised meetings to express their

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<sup>71</sup> A Hindu slogan meaning 'Hail to the Motherland', it is originally written by Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay and turned into a song by Jadunath Bhattacharya in 1876. It was first sung publicly at the Indian National Congress in 1896 and thereafter at other similar gatherings. The two-word expression also came to be used as a slogan for the nationalist movement.

<sup>72</sup> This is also a Hindu slogan meaning 'Hail to the Motherland', however; the emphasis in this slogan is on the embodiment of India as the mother goddess.

opposition to the Seditious Meetings Act and carried out a very public campaign to support Rai and Singh. Most of their activities were carried out in the public sphere, through public meetings and print media like Raza's newspaper, the *Aftab*. Even when the Seditious Meetings Act was in force, they gathered privately to discuss their opposition to state policies. The state's efforts at censorship were producing more, not fewer, arenas of political discourse. Colonised elites, motivated by nationalist and patriotic causes, were constructing public spaces and creating landscapes of public political practice.

Much of the nationalist activity during this period was led by Hindus. The divisions between Hindus and Muslims in Delhi prompted some Muslims to come out publicly in support of the colonial state. In June 1907, the Deputy Commissioner had received a letter from two Delhi Muslims explaining that they had distributed a pamphlet throughout Delhi, Punjab and other northern provinces in order to denounce the spate of seditious speeches that were being made by certain 'ungrateful and short sighted'<sup>73</sup> Delhi citizens which 'had compelled the Government to take repressive steps for the restoration of peace'.<sup>74</sup> They went on to say that they had made attempts to 'impress upon the public generally [and] Mohammadans especially the acts of kindness, welfare and obligation which the benign and benevolent government had been doing for us'.<sup>75</sup> Multi-layered and conflicting Indian discourses circulated in Delhi's public spheres during this period. As the majority of the nationalist activity following the proposed partition of Bengal had been initiated by Hindus, there was an effort among some of Delhi's Muslims to publicly declare an oppositional stance. Indians were articulating their political concerns and conducting their social and political competitions in the public sphere. They were using public spaces, not only to express their opposition to

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<sup>73</sup> D.S.A.: 7/1907/D.C.

<sup>74</sup> *ibid*

<sup>75</sup> *ibid*



state policies, but also to shape their relations with each other and to articulate their diverse political understandings. Anti-colonial opposition was only one of the motivations for the Indians' participation in public spheres.

The nationalists in Delhi continued to make inroads to the public sphere when they acted to negotiate the Newspapers and Incitement to Offences Act of 1908. Haidar Raza had ceased to be publisher and printer of the *Aftab* in February 1908 because he had come under the scrutiny of the government. He had been prosecuted and fined for the seditious tone of articles in the paper. In April 1908 a meeting was held in order to express sympathy with Raza. Professor Raghbar Dayal from St. Stephen's College presided at the meeting where Raza was greeted with rousing support. He was highly praised for his work during the meeting and after it ended Raza was escorted through the city of Delhi in a processional carriage drawn by students (Singh, *ibid*: 127). In order to prevent further prosecution by the government, Raza put forward dummy editors and proprietors for the *Aftab* while retaining control over the paper. He publicly declared that he had sold the newspaper and the press to Ram Chand Peshawari. Haidar Raza continued to edit the paper until July 3, 1908, after which he went on a pilgrimage around India and thereafter to England. In August 1908 the Government prosecuted the new proprietor of the paper, Ram Chand Peshawari for four articles it had identified as seditious. Publication of the paper was stopped soon after. Amir Chand and Raghbar Dayal started a new paper called the *Akash* in order to replace the *Aftab* in Delhi. The *Akash* published its first issue on November 5 1908. A lot of publicity was carried out in Delhi and Lahore to advertise and increase circulation of the *Akash* (*ibid*: 132). These are important events for several reasons. While the state's legislation against the Indian press was effective to the extent that people like Raza and Peshawari were prosecuted for seditious articles in the *Aftab* and it consequently ceased publication, the Indians continued to develop methods to participate in the public sphere. By publicly feting

Raza through the streets of Delhi, they were making a statement that was just as effective as publishing an article or making a speech at a public meeting. By putting forward dummy editors for the *Aftab*, Raza attempted to ensure the continuation of this public organ of opinion. When it finally ceased publication, the *Akash* came along to fill the void. The social and political organisation of the Indians to create spaces of public discourse was innovative and relentless. Therefore, it was the combination of print technology and the specific political contexts that were driving the Indians to create and participate in public spaces of discourse. Nationalist activities and the restrictions by the colonial state were also important factors which led the Indians to innovate in the public sphere.

In August 1908, on the day that Khudiram Bose, the activist from Bengal who had been responsible for the bomb attack that killed two English women, was executed, the Bengalis in Delhi marked it as a day of fasting and prayer. There was an extensive sale in the city and at the railway station, there was a display of photographs of Khudiram Bose, Sardar Ajit Singh, Lala Rajpat Rai, Tilak and others, besides a small map of India painted red at certain places marked the 'blood of boys' (ibid: 128). This public support of nationalists, including violent activists like Bose, made a very significant statement. An important national solidarity was expressed through this display that turned the Delhi railway station into a political public space.

On August 14, 1908, a public meeting was held at a private residence, where Amir Chand denounced the Delhi Tramways as foreign and encouraged Indians to boycott them in the spirit of the *Swadeshi* movement. To promote the boycott further Raza announced another public meeting on August 19, 1908 in the Queens Gardens, close to the city centre. Under the Seditious Meetings Act, which had been renewed, The District Magistrate served a notice prohibiting the meeting. On the appointed day, Raza

informed the public at the Queens Gardens that the meeting had been moved slightly further away, to the eastern bank of the Jumna river, which formed part of the Meerut district in the United Provinces. Raza addressed the crowd at the new venue and protested against the prohibition of the public meeting in the Queens Gardens, 'a spot paid for and maintained by the citizens of Delhi' (ibid: 130). The boycott of the Delhi Tramways was successful and though they had had to move their public meeting outside the city, Raza, Amir Chand and their followers had succeeded in the public promotion of the *Swadeshi* boycott. It is also notable that, during the meeting in Meerut, they laid claim to the Queens Gardens as a public space. To the District Magistrate, the Queens Gardens was a space that had to be preserved from the Delhi nationalists, in order to prevent them from seditious public addresses whereas, for the Indians, it was a public resource that should have been available to them for the promotion of their nationalist agendas.

In addition to an increase in newspapers, there was a growth in the circulation of pamphlets. In 1908, a number of political pamphlets posted from London were received by students of various colleges in the Punjab and were distributed throughout Northern India. At Delhi, the leaflets were distributed among students of the Hindu College and at the railway platform (ibid: 124). In addition, there was a stream of leaflets coming into Delhi from the Yugantar Ashram in California, hailing people like the executed Khudiram Bose as heroes to the cause of Indian nationalism. The Yugantar Ashram had been created by Har Dayal, an exiled nationalist. This was one among several initiatives by Indian émigrés and exiled political activists to begin and continue the promotion of Indian nationalist causes from their adopted homelands. Pamphlets were an especially cheap and mobile way to transmit and circulate messages. Moreover, it was difficult for the state to trace the authors of the pamphlets and legislate against printing presses as some of them came in from outside India. Customs and postal officers were not always



successful in intercepting these pamphlets. Not only did these printed materials create important links between global and local colonial spaces by circulating within them, but they also turned spaces like the railway platform, the Hindu college, the reading room at St. Stephen's College into political spaces. These pamphlets were an important public space of discourse as well as an effective way to connect people and practices in distant spaces.

Spaces like the reading room at St. Stephen's College and a library and bookshop started by Amir Chand in Chandni Chowk also became public arenas for the dissemination of political discourses (ibid: 135). In June 1907, a notice had been issued from the Government of India to all local Governments regarding the participation of teachers and pupils of secondary schools, colleges and universities in political movements. They consequently issued instructions to these institutions to prevent students from participating in public meetings or indulging in any sort of political agitation; and teachers were banned from making 'public utterances of political opinion such as may introduce into the minds of the pupils doctrines subversive of their respect for authority and calculated to impair their usefulness as citizens and to hinder their advancement in after-life'.<sup>76</sup> The involvement of students in political movements would hamper their educational progress and in turn injure the future prospects of the students and even 'subvert the traditional foundations of Indian family life'.<sup>77</sup> It was also stipulated that the local government had the authority to withdraw any grants, scholarships and official recognition it had made to the offending schools and colleges, which, in most cases, meant that the institution would no longer be able to function. Recognising that inquiring minds at educational institutions were taking an interest in nationalist politics, the state sought to prevent the emergence of yet more public spaces of political discourse and to subvert the efforts of people like Amir Chand and Raza

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<sup>76</sup> D.S.A.: 7/1880/D.C.

<sup>77</sup> ibid

who used their respective schools and colleges in order to promote nationalist causes among their students. Amir Chand resigned from St. Stephen's School in late 1908, following the Cambridge Mission's disapproval of his activities. After 1908, Amir Chand rose to further prominence in the nationalist movement in Delhi. He began to sell Urdu translations of nationalistic writings in Delhi's bazaars (ibid: 135). Later, in December 1910 Amir Chand would be instrumental in establishing a secret society with the express aim of creating and circulating political pamphlets.

In early 1909 Delhi's residents began debating the proposed Government of India reforms which recommended separate electorates for the Hindus and Muslims. Public meetings to discuss the reforms were held in April 1909 in which they were largely denounced because several Hindus and Muslims felt that they would create a chasm between the two communities. However, while a Hindu Sudha Sabha was formed in Delhi to protest the reforms, a group of Muslims created a branch of the All India Muslim League at Delhi in 1909 in order to support them. The Hindu papers were especially critical. The *Akash* strongly condemned the reforms and, as a result, the proprietor, Ganeshi Lal Khasta, was arrested and prosecuted on charges of sedition in December 1909. Following the institution of the 1910 Press Act, Ganeshi Lal Khasta withdrew his name as printer and publisher of the newspaper in February of that year and it ceased publication altogether soon after (ibid: 155). The Press Act of 1910 was frequently employed to suppress the Indian press. In approximately four years, as many as two dozen printing presses in Delhi were prosecuted or charged under the Act (ibid).

Indians were participating in the public sphere and creating new public spaces of discourse in Delhi. These public spaces became especially crucial for the articulation and communication of cultural and political understandings. These included Hindu and Muslim communal concerns, the *Swadeshi* cause, and support for anti-partition

activists. In the wake of the formation of the Indian National Congress and the Bengal anti-partition activities, the landscape of Delhi became awash with print media such as newspapers and pamphlets and public meetings in order to promote anti-colonial, nationalist and other political discourses and activities. People like Raza and Amir Chand were successful in using both public and private spaces, in spite of the Seditious Meetings Act, in order to organise and show support for *Swadeshi* and the Bengal anti-partition movement. They negotiated press legislation in innovative ways in order to continue spreading their messages. Pamphlets became an effective way to circulate political messages throughout Delhi, from railway platforms to school classrooms, and to create connections between exiled political émigrés in California and London and people in Delhi. Public displays were organised to express solidarity with prosecuted and executed Indian activists. Far from circumscribing the growth of the Indian public sphere, the colonial government's strategies to define and legislate against sedition and to censor the Indian press had only served to increase political activities in private and public spaces and to intensify and expand the landscape of political discourse. Moreover, it was these very state actions that were often the subject of discourses in Indian public spheres. After 1908 things quietened down for a brief period in Delhi although there was more violent activity in Bengal. Following the transfer of the capital of British India from Calcutta to Delhi in 1911, a bomb attack in Delhi led the state to reassert its paranoid claims about the inherent violence of political discourses in India.

## **6.5 The Delhi bomb**

When Delhi became the capital of India in 1911, the city of Delhi along with a part of surrounding territory was placed under the direct administration of the Government of India. The newly created enclave was placed under a Chief Commissioner, under the



immediate control of the Governor-General-in-Council. Many reasons were attributed to the transfer; however, it is widely acknowledged that the principal reason was to distance the seat of government far from the politically volatile province of Bengal. (Gupta, *ibid*; Singh, *ibid*; Sarkar, *ibid*; Popplewell, *ibid*)

On December 23<sup>rd</sup> 1912, the State Entry of the Viceroy Lord Hardinge took place in order to mark the transfer of government. As the procession to mark this occasion passed through Chandni Chowk a bomb was thrown at the car carrying the Viceroy and it exploded; however, the Viceroy survived the attack. There was a widespread outcry among Indians against the bomb attack and there were thousands of telegrams sent to the government as well as public expressions of sympathy. There was even a meeting on December 24, 1912 at Queens Gardens, attended by hundreds of Indians and members of the Delhi Municipal Committee, in order to publicly denounce the bomb attack (Singh, *ibid*: 179).

On December 25, 1912, Har Dayal, an exiled political activist, held a meeting at the Yugantar Ashram in California where he claimed responsibility for the bomb. He issued a pamphlet called “Yugantar Circular: The Delhi Bomb”, in which he discussed the usefulness of the bomb as part of a revolutionary nationalist strategy (*ibid*: 182).

Following the bomb incident, the Government of India discussed the possibility of amending the Indian Penal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure which related to the offence of criminal conspiracy. The government asserted that ‘outrages in Bengal culminating in the attempt on the life of the Viceroy at Delhi have shown [...] that the crimes which have occurred since the Royal visit were not the last flicker of expiring anarchy in one Province; but that anarchical conspiracies, probably with wide

ramifications, are a living force in India'.<sup>78</sup> It was established that repressive measures were the only way to curb seditious activity, and that so soon as the authorities became slightly relaxed or tolerant, writers and speakers grew bolder and less restrained and that:

so insidious is the advance of this boldness from slightly increased acrimony and slightly greater perverseness of criticism to seditious innuendo and veiled sedition, that the steps by which carping criticisms gradually evolve themselves into dangerous writing and inflammatory talk are scarcely perceptible until the Government once again finds itself confronted with a campaign against the ebullition of seditious unrest. During the last period of unrest of 1906-1910 this was the situation that had to be faced, and various stringent measures to deal with it were passed into the ordinary law of the land.<sup>79</sup>

It was recommended that local authorities should be watchful for nascent seditious tendencies and stop them before general repressive action became necessary. The Viceroy observed that the government should be intolerant of 'every intemperance of political language and methods which is likely to influence ill-balanced minds and lead them by insidious stages to hideous crimes'.<sup>80</sup>

Here, the state was again ascribing a violent force to language and words, blaming them for the outbreak of violence. It claimed that 'carping' criticisms gradually prepared the ground for seditious doctrines and eventually led to violent attacks. The state was insisting that there was an inevitable progression from political criticism to violence. In other words, Indians were incapable of political critique without it leading to 'hideous

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<sup>78</sup> D.S.A.: 23/1913/H.C.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid

<sup>80</sup> Ibid

crimes'. It was more than likely that Indians who were strongly opposed to specific policies of the colonial state, would articulate their criticism and opposition strongly in public forums. It was not, however, very likely that those persistent critiques would inevitably lead to violence. The violent rhetoric and activities were a very minor part of Indian activism during this time. There were many different strands of political discourse and activities, of varying tone and intensity. This universalising of all political critique as dangerous was designed to allow the state to continue with its surveillance of public spheres and censorship of Indian discourses.

On the first anniversary of the Delhi bomb, another pamphlet entitled *Shahbash* (Well Done!) was issued from the Yugantar Ashram. On the front cover of the pamphlet was a picture of the tree of liberty growing out of a pair of bombs bearing the caption, "Price per copy...An Englishman's head.' The pamphlet hailed the bomb as a miracle and extremely successful for rekindling 'the fire of national activity that had been smouldering for a time'.<sup>81</sup> It went on to denounce leaders of the Indian National Congress such as Lajpat Rai as 'undignified cowards [...who were...] misleading the nation, because they entertain the absurd notion that the English Government will become alarmed at mere talk or will be cajoled by flattery to grant justice [...]and abat[e] their tyranny'.<sup>82</sup> The pamphlet hailed terror as the surest way of ensuring justice for the Indians. Referring to the control and censorship of the Indian press, it encouraged the establishment of secret printing presses for the 'publication of the literature of freedom'.<sup>83</sup> It went on to claim that the 'use of the bomb and the pistol is the most effective weapon of the political sermon'.<sup>84</sup> The pamphlet also described how Indians were being oppressed in Britain's other colonies such as the Transvaal in South Africa and stated that:

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<sup>81</sup> D.S.A.: 14/1915/H.C.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid

<sup>83</sup> Ibid

<sup>84</sup> Ibid



Indians have received permission to stand near the table cloth of civilization, but are not yet entitled to sit down at the table and partake of the meal. The bomb gives a higher reputation to a nation than learned men and religious preachers can. The world does not care for learned men and priests are slaves, because the stink of slavery revolts the senses of civilized peoples and shuts up their ears [...] Throw a bomb in your own home and the newspaper correspondents and leaders of the four continents come to your doors themselves to find out what is the matter [...]

Bande Mataram<sup>85</sup>

On 13<sup>th</sup> of June 1914, two copies of the *Shahbash* pamphlet were impounded on their way into India under the Sea Customs Act of 1878. The Chief Commissioner of Delhi was instructed to remain vigilant to the circulation of this pamphlet in Delhi.<sup>86</sup>

In the previous section I had described how Lajpat Rai, a political activist and newspaper editor from the Punjab, had been prosecuted by the state for his activities (see p. 162). Whereas the state had identified him as dangerous, the Yugantar Ashram activists denounced him as too moderate to be effective. For a small group of Indian extremists, discourse alone was not enough, violent action was the only way to ensure justice for the Indians. The Yugantar Ashram emphasised that bombs and guns were the necessary companion of political sermons and that discourse and rhetoric had to be accompanied by violent force. The words in this pamphlet were indeed incitements to violence; however, they did not evolve naturally from every day ‘carping’ political criticism, as the state was inclined to imply; this was an extraordinary pamphlet, commemorating an extraordinary event.

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid

<sup>86</sup> Ibid

In 1914, the Delhi police found several copies of leaflets promoting violence called *Liberty* at Amir Chand's residence and some evidence of links between Amir Chand, Avadh Behari, who was apparently the author of these leaflets, and other people from the secret society that had been founded by Amir Chand in 1910, as well as some personal belongings of known nationalist activists from Bengal. The secret society comprised three groups of nationalists spread throughout northern India, including Delhi, Lahore, Jaipur and Gurdaspur (Singh, *ibid*: 187). Also, at this time, the Bengal police had established links between the bombs used in five different attacks between March 1911 and May 1913, including the one at Delhi in 1912 (Popplewell, *ibid*: 86). A case was brought against various members of this society for the bomb attack on the Viceroy under the Indian Penal Code and this came to be known as the Delhi-Lahore Conspiracy Case. Amir Chand and Avadh Behari were also charged under the Explosives Act and they were among those sentenced to death in October 1914 even though there had been no concrete proof of their involvement in the 1912 bomb incident (Singh, *ibid*: 188).

## 6.6 Conclusions

During a period when more Indians than ever were coming together through the medium of the press and public meetings in order to construct and exchange political discourses on a range of issues, the state created a deliberately broad definition of sedition in order to sensationalise and vilify these activities and to deny Indians access to their own public spaces of discourse. With the law of sedition, the state was emphasising the harmful effects of words and language in order to justify restricting their production and circulation in Indian public spaces. With the Seditious Meetings Act and the press laws the state attempted to not only regulate *what* was being said, but

it also attempted to control the spaces *where* these words were spoken and written. The state insisted that the political situation in India was different and especially volatile and therefore warranted these measures of censorship and control. These discursive constructions of Indians as different and their discourses as seditious were calculated to give the state the power to control the growth of Indian public spheres because the emergence of more spaces where people were constructing informed public opinions threatened to undermine the power of the colonial government.

Indians were creating and becoming involved in more nationalist initiatives which included but were not reduced to anti-colonial resistance and opposition. Moreover, even when Indians did express their opposition to specific policies of the colonial state, such as the partition of Bengal and the press laws, they were not all inherently harmful and seditious. However, as the state had awarded itself the power to interpret what was seditious and what constituted a seditious public meeting, it used its discretion to discursively construct Indians and their discourses as dangerous and thereby control their public spaces of discourse. Indians challenged the state's accusations of sedition by showing that sections of newspaper articles were taken out of context in order to portray them as seditious (I illustrate this further in the following Chapter with a close reading of the *Comrade* newspaper that the state had interpreted as having a dangerous Pan-Islamic agenda). In this way, the discourses that the state had tried to censor were continually brought back into the public sphere by Indians. When political activities took a particularly volatile and even violent turn following the proposed partition of Bengal, the state blamed the press for the violence. Words were not only capable of exciting disaffection; they were also mediums of violence and murder. There is no denying that there was violence and there were pamphlets that preached the use of violence, however, these were not commonplace; moreover, they were not the inevitable culmination of minor political criticisms in the press and public meetings. The state



deliberately tried to universalise the different strands of political discourse in public spaces by issuing grave warnings against them which prepared the ground for and justified the state's continued interventions against them.

I analysed the different ways that Indians in Delhi interpreted and reacted to the interventions of the colonial state. People like Raza, Amir Chand and Rai created and facilitated the spread of political discourses through print media and public meetings, often negotiating, thwarting and protesting against the sedition and press laws. Indeed, as I have stated repeatedly, they severely undermined the state's attempts to censor certain speech acts because these very speech acts became the sites of contestation and spawned new public spaces of discourse. I also described how Indians used print media to create links between national colonial spaces, such as Delhi and Bengal and between international spaces such as the Yugantar Ashram in California and colleges, bazaars and railway platforms in Delhi. The circulation of newspapers and pamphlets between these spaces created symbolic and material connections between them, and their distribution and circulation within multiple spaces in Delhi politicised the urban landscape in an unprecedented way. It is imperative to analyse the ways that colonised peoples created discursive connections between colonial spaces because they too were involved in local, national and global exchanges of people, discourses and materials. Research in postcolonial geography has prioritised the analysis of imperial networks created by the European colonisers but it is essential to recognise that colonised peoples also created and were involved in networks of political practices which informed the policies and contributed to the formation of the colonial state.

Public spaces of discourse were crucially important for the continual reformulation of a diverse range of political practices and for the creation of meaningful connections between colonial spaces. In Chapters Four and Five, I analysed the construction of

public spaces by a series of processes that were defined by dialogues primarily between members of the colonial state and the Saraogis in Delhi. In this chapter, while the sense of dialogue between the colonial state and the Indians is not immediately obvious, there is certainly the sense of co-fabrication, in that public spaces of discourse were defined by the discursive and spatial practices of the British and the Indians. Indeed, there is considerably more evidence of the dynamics of power, conflict and opposition in the encounters between the state and the Indians than there was in the case the Saraogis' *rathjattras*; however, it is also obvious that the Indians were not only fully involved in the production of their public spaces but that they also challenged, informed and transformed the role of the colonial state. The policies of the colonial state constantly adapted to the dynamic local and national contexts in India and, moreover, the Indians also constructed their understandings in response to local, national and international practices and processes. In the following chapter I continue my analysis of the public spheres in Delhi with a close look at Indian, and especially Muslim, public opinion during the First World War.

# Chapter Seven: Pan-Islamism in Delhi: The First World War and public opinion

## 7.1 Introduction

The significance of public spheres for the construction and communication of political discourses and for the creation of connections between spaces intensified considerably throughout the twentieth century. Print media became vital for those Indians who wanted to participate in the multiple public spheres. The state continued to be very interested in and concerned with various manifestations of Indian public opinion and its campaign to disrupt the organisation of Indians in public spaces once again assumed a heightened urgency during the First World War.

In this chapter I examine how an Indian Muslim journalist and political activist, Mohamed Ali, used a newspaper as part of his campaign to create a network of concern and support for Muslims in response to a series of domestic and international events, culminating in the First World War. My aim is to emphasise that public spaces of discourse were heterogeneous spaces that embodied the complex political ambitions of Indians like Mohamed Ali. I also describe how the colonial state made over-simplified interpretations of Mohamed Ali's discursive activities within these spaces, often declaring them as a dangerous influence on Indians and therefore a threat to the state's campaign to manipulate public opinion to Britain's favour during the First World War.

I begin by describing the series of national and international events that affected Muslims in India after 1910 and I show how some early attempts by the Muslim press to represent these events were interpreted by the state. In section 7.3, I analyse some of the initiatives by Mohamed Ali to create Pan-Islamic networks by examining some of



the discourses in his English newspaper, the *Comrade*. I show how he used a public space of discourse to establish links between Muslims in India and beyond as well as to negotiate his complex identity and loyalties. Following this, I describe the state's continuing campaign to police Delhi's public spheres with a specific emphasis on its interpretation of Muslim public opinion and the influence of Mohamed Ali during the early stages of the First World War. Finally, I discuss how the state panicked at the prevalence of rumours about Britain in Delhi's bazaars and how it plotted to suppress and manipulate the news in order to ensure support for the British war effort.

## 7.2 Discontent among Muslims

Right before the outbreak of the First World War, there were a number of domestic and international events 'which unsettled men's minds and paved the way for disorder'<sup>87</sup> in India. While Hindus and Sikhs had been affected by the Komagata Maru affair<sup>88</sup> and the Rikabganj Gurudwara episode,<sup>89</sup> there were a number of events that propelled the Muslims of India to participate in the Indian public sphere and to create spaces of discourse and networks of communication in an unprecedented manner.

The granting of separate electorates to Hindus and Muslims in 1909 had pleased many Muslims; however, after 1910, a number of grievances arose for Muslims in India. The annulment of the proposed partition of Bengal in 1911 had shocked and angered many

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<sup>87</sup> D.S.A.: 7/1907/D.C.

<sup>88</sup> A ship load of would-be Sikh and Punjabi Muslim immigrants, turned back from Vancouver by Canadian immigration authorities in 1914, clashed with police on their return at Budge Budge in Calcutta, and twenty two Indians were killed.

<sup>89</sup> At the beginning of 1914, the state straightened out the boundary wall of the Rikabganj Gurudwara in Delhi, which was a temple of holy significance to the Sikhs. Harchand Singh, who had been an ally of Ajit Singh's in the agitation of 1907, held a number of meetings in Punjab and thereafter a group of Sikhs attempted to forcibly restore the demolished boundary wall. The state intervened to stop this from taking place.

Indian Muslims because they believed that the government had sacrificed Muslim interests to Hindu terrorist agitation. In August 1912, the scheme for a Muslim university at Aligarh was rejected which disappointed many Muslims who believed that an independent system of Muslim education was crucial for the progress of Indian Muslims (Basu, 1981: 116). In August 1913, a mosque in Cawnpore (Kanpur) was partially demolished in order to straighten a road which resulted in a riot in which several Muslims were killed by the colonial authorities.

In addition to these domestic events, the Italo-Turkish War<sup>90</sup> and the Balkan War<sup>91</sup> had a significant impact on the Muslims in India. These attacks by Christian allies of Britain on Muslim populations made many Indian Muslims feel as if the British were not interested in protecting Muslim interests abroad. One colonial official surmised that ‘the ignorant populace – who knew of only two Great Powers, England and Turkey – was led to believe that the Balkan confederacy could never have dared to attack Turkey without the permission, if not the support of Britain’.<sup>92</sup>

These events were widely documented and even denounced in Muslim-owned newspapers and in pamphlets. A pamphlet on the ‘bloody massacre of Kanpur’ by Khwaja Hasan Nizami of Delhi was circulated in the city and in neighbouring provinces (Singh, 1972: 224-225). A series of three ‘disloyal’<sup>93</sup> articles about the Cawnpore Affair appeared in a vernacular newspaper from Lahore, the *Zamindar*, and the state acted by confiscating the security of the paper because ‘the effect of this campaign was undoubtedly to stimulate fanaticism among the lower classes of the Muhammadans of

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<sup>90</sup> The Italo-Turkish War, also known as the Libyan War, took place between the Ottoman Empire and Italy between September 1911 and October 1912. Italy seized the Ottoman provinces of Triploitania and Cyrenaica, which together formed what is now known as Libya.

<sup>91</sup> The Balkan Wars comprised two wars between 1912 and 1913 during which the Balkan League, namely Bulgaria, Montenegro, Greece and Serbia conquered Ottoman occupied Macedonia, Albania and most of Thrace. There was widespread support for the Balkan Christians from the European countries.

<sup>92</sup> D.S.A.: 54/1918/H.C.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid

the province in the towns [...however...] the better-informed and more important sections held aloof lest they might come in for abuse and dishonour from the leaders of the rabble'.<sup>94</sup> The government used the Press Act of 1910 to deal with the 'reckless campaign by Muhammadan newspapers against the British Empire, Christianity and Europe'.<sup>95</sup> In addition to the earlier legislation against the *Zamindar*, they issued warnings to four other newspapers. The state was continuing its campaign to emphasise the harmful effects of the Indian press and, as I show in this chapter, it made targeted attacks against specific sections of the Muslim press, often blaming it for misleading uneducated and impressionable Indians.

For many Muslims in India, events like the Wars, the Aligarh University issue and the Cawnpore Mosque affair were perceived as a threat to Islam and the position of the Muslims in India. The wars between European and Muslim countries were sometimes represented in the media as Christian wars against Islam and this concerned the British because they feared that this would incite Muslims against Britain and her Christian allies. Print media such as Muslim newspapers and pamphlets were crucial spaces for the articulation and circulation of discourses on these issues. These public spaces allowed Muslims to formulate complex cultural and political understandings, however, the state continued to interpret and portray these efforts as anti-colonial and anti-Christian in order to restrict and control these public spheres. Support for Muslim causes in the public sphere was responsible for the growth of Pan-Islamism. Pan-Islamism has been described as a series of efforts by Indian Muslims to choose the ideal of Islamic brotherhood for the articulation of their political aspirations. The Khilafat movement in India between 1919 and 1924 is often hailed as the culmination of the Pan-Islamic movement in India. The Khilafat movement made the preservation of the power of the Khalifa or Caliph, the Sultan of Turkey, and the territorial integrity of

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid

<sup>95</sup> Ibid



Turkey its main focus. This was important because the Caliph was regarded by many as the chief guardian of the holy places of Islam and the successor to prophet Mohamed. The Khilafat movement became full fledged after the First World War, when the Ottoman Empire was defeated and broken up by the Treaty of Versailles (see Minault, 1982, for a thorough analysis of the nationalist characteristics of the Khilafat movement). Even before the Khilafat movement, however, there were significant initiatives to galvanise Muslims around common religious and political concerns. In the following section I describe how Mohamed Ali, a Muslim journalist and political activist in Delhi, was very instrumental in keeping the government's and the public's attention on domestic and international Muslim causes and events. I show that he encouraged the growth of Pan-Islamism by creating networks of communication and support through the medium of his newspaper the *Comrade*. I also describe how, in addition to expressing his attachment to Muslim concerns, Mohamed Ali used his newspaper to define and negotiate his complex identity as a Muslim who was also Indian and a British subject.

### **7.3 Mohamed Ali and the *Comrade***

Mohamed Ali was born in Rampur in 1878. He began his studies at the Aligarh College in India and went on to study history at the University of Oxford. After a few unsuccessful attempts to procure various government jobs in India, he threw himself into a journalism career based in Delhi which would prove to be one of his most enduring legacies. Mohamed Ali and his brother Shaukat Ali arrived in Delhi with the shifting of the Government of India capital in 1911 (Ali, 1999: 14-15). His weekly English newspaper, the *Comrade*, which started on January 14<sup>th</sup> 1911 in Calcutta but printed its first edition from Delhi on 12<sup>th</sup> October 1912 (Basu, 1981: 111), had an

extensive readership among the British as well as the Indian elite (Basu, *ibid*; Minault, *ibid*: 23). He also began an Urdu daily newspaper in 1912 called the *Hamdard*. Ali credited the press for being very instrumental in the 'extraordinarily quick development'<sup>96</sup> of India. Mohamed Ali claimed that the *Hamdard* was intended to 'educate the people' whereas the *Comrade* 'had to be their spokesman as well, and to act as a medium between them and their rulers' (Ali, *ibid*: 97). He had intentionally created an English language newspaper in order to communicate with the colonial state. He insisted that 'His Majesty's Indian subjects of every class and creed have as much right to give advice in the affairs of the Empire as any resident of the British Isles or of the Colonies, and our voice sooner or later will have a fair hearing'.<sup>97</sup> Mohamed Ali was asserting his identity as a British subject; he was using his newspaper as a medium of communication with the British colonial state, which he believed he was entitled to do as a colonial citizen.

In the *Comrade*, Mohamed Ali wrote and published a number of editorials, articles, humorous anecdotes, short stories and poems; and he featured a number of cartoons on a range of themes, including popular culture, politics and religion. He had a 'letters to the editor' section where he received several responses to his articles primarily from Muslim journalists and community leaders but also from British colonial officials. Ali had created a public space for the communication and exchange of discourses on a range of social issues, from the flippant to the meaningful. Ali's passion, however, was manifested in his dedication to national and international Muslim causes and events (see Hasan, 1981, 1979; Dixit 1981; Jafri 1965).

Ali believed that it was his duty to organise support for other Muslims through the public medium of his newspaper, the *Comrade*. While he wrote about all sorts of issues

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<sup>96</sup> *Comrade* 20<sup>th</sup> September 1913

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid*

affecting Muslims, including more prosaic religious and social concerns, he was very keen to promote the protection of Muslim interests. Following the Cawnpore Mosque Affair and the revocation of the partition of Bengal, on which he wrote long editorials discussing their effects on Muslims, Ali explained that it was only right that the Muslim press 'redoubled their efforts and organised help for their coreligionists who were in trouble and whom their great Faith has taught them to look upon as their own "brethren"'.<sup>98</sup> He criticised the anti-cow killing agitation by the Hindus and warned that Urdu should be protected as the national language and feared that it was endangered by efforts to replace it with Hindi.<sup>99</sup> He discussed instances when he thought Muslims were being unfairly treated by Hindus. In an article entitled "Heads I Win, Tails You Lose" he criticized the fact that Muslims were a minority on the Municipal Board in Wazirabad, a city in the Punjab, even though they were a majority of the population. When steps were taken to correct this by the government, Ali claims that Hindus complained because:

[A] section of [them] has begun to feel for the first time, that the position of a minority, in which the Mussalmans are in almost all provinces, is not nearly so agreeable as that of a dominant majority. The same recognition led to the unparalleled agitation against the Partition of Bengal, which has given us the anarchist and the political assassin and dacoit.<sup>100</sup>

Mohamed Ali was especially passionate about education as a way for Muslims to progress and, through the *Comrade*; he fervently championed the case for the Muslim university at Aligarh where his Alma Mater, the Aligarh College, was situated. In a

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid

<sup>99</sup> N.M.M.L.: *Comrade* 22<sup>nd</sup> July 1912

<sup>100</sup> N.M.M.L.: *Comrade* 8<sup>th</sup> July 1911



piece entitled “The Islamia College Peshawar”,<sup>101</sup> he encouraged an arts college for the education of Muslim youths and in another article called “The Grant To The Islamia College Lahore”,<sup>102</sup> he criticised the stringent conditions imposed on a recurring grant to the college. Through his newspaper, Ali was communicating with the colonial state on behalf of Muslims. Mohamed Ali did not create the *Comrade* simply to report the news and entertain his reading public. It was an important part of Mohamed Ali’s political agenda for the promotion and protection of Muslim interests.

Ali was especially interested in reporting on and discussing international events that involved Muslims. In “A Mockery of British Justice”, Ali commented on a story in another newspaper, the *Burma Critic*, which reported on the rape of a young Burmese Muslim girl under the age of ten by a British colonial official who was never charged for the offence.<sup>103</sup> He condemned the failure to hold the British man accountable. He wrote several articles on a Muslim organisation called The Islamic Society in London. He described the frequencies of the meetings, the numbers and nationalities of people in attendance and the main activities of the Society.<sup>104</sup> Ali singled out the achievements of Muslims internationally. He praised the success of a Turkish woman who was a medical student at the Royal Free Hospital in London, hailing it as ‘[y]et another piece of evidence as to the advancement of Turkish women’.<sup>105</sup> In this way, Ali fostered the creation of connections between Muslims in distant spaces; he contributed to the growth of Pan-Islamic sentiment and activities by dedicating a significant part of his newspaper to domestic and international Muslim concerns.

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<sup>101</sup> N.M.M.L.: *Comrade* 29<sup>th</sup> March 1913

<sup>102</sup> N.M.M.L.: *Comrade* 13<sup>th</sup> September 1914

<sup>103</sup> N.M.M.L.: *Comrade* 8<sup>th</sup> June 1912

<sup>104</sup> N.M.M.L.: *Comrade* 10<sup>th</sup> January 1914

<sup>105</sup> Ibid

While Ali wrote extensively about Muslim causes and deeply reflective articles about Islam, particularly in his later years, he wanted the Muslim community in India to progress. He believed that cooperation with Hindus, and participation in nationalist organisations like the Indian National Congress would serve the Muslims well and he would go on to be a key player in the Khilafat movement in the 1920s which worked briefly with the Indian National Congress towards independence from the British.

In his very first editorial Mohamed Ali made pleas for Hindu-Muslim cooperation. In another editorial entitled “Hindu-Moslem Relations”, he expressed that ‘a rare combination of circumstances has brought the Mussalmans and the Hindus into a frame of mind when they are eager to grasp at all suggestions towards mutual understanding and the peaceful adjustment of mutual differences. No such opportunity would recur for another generation if it is wasted in sheer talk’.<sup>106</sup> Ali was an astute political commentator. While he was critical of the violent Bengali-Hindu partition activists, he was able to make distinctions between them and other Hindus. Ali was a progressive Muslim who believed in Indian nationalism. He realised that working together with Hindu nationalists would be the surest way of ensuring progress for the Muslim community. His religious and communal loyalties did not conflict with his nationalist leanings. Ali used the *Comrade* as a space in which to express and share his religious and political aspirations and communicate them to the colonial state, and in which to negotiate the complex aspects of his identity.

Ali was very critical of the 1910 Press Act (see p. 158) and strongly expressed his frustrations about it in the *Comrade* and encouraged editors of other Muslim newspapers to do so. He wrote an article entitled “Moslem Press and Press Act” in which he specified that the Muslims and the Muslim press had done and were doing ‘all

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<sup>106</sup> N.M.M.L.: *Comrade* 31<sup>st</sup> May 1913

they could to support Government as long as they feel that the Government was just and its officials anxious to respect the feelings of the people'.<sup>107</sup> Ali published a letter from Zafar Ali Khan, the editor of the *Zamindar* newspaper, which had had to pay an increased security to the state because of its 'seditious' content. Zafar Ali, writing from London, explained that he had been trying to galvanise public opinion in England against the Press Act in India. He claimed to have garnered sympathy with the *Daily News and Leader* and the *Manchester Guardian*, so much so that the former had published a number of Zafar Ali's letters 'on the various cases of flagrant injustice which Moslem editors [had] recently suffered under the Press Act'.<sup>108</sup> Zafar Ali also quoted excerpts from several members of the English parliament who had expressed concerns about suppressions of the press in India. Zafar Ali warned that 'it is justice tempered with sympathy that will secure India to England for an indefinite period, and not the doings of the bureaucrats who think that British rule can be prolonged by the strangling of the Press'.<sup>109</sup>

Ali praised the work of the *Zamindar* and its editor, Zafar Ali Khan and he criticised the state's legislation against the *Zamindar*, saying that, with the help of rivals of the *Zamindar*, the colonial officials, 'whose knowledge of Indian languages is, with extremely few exceptions, very meagre, were made to believe that the *Zamindar* had been publishing articles of a dangerous character'.<sup>110</sup> As a result of these 'cock-and-bull stories',<sup>111</sup> the *Zamindar* had been ordered to provide a security of one thousand rupees each for the weekly and daily editions of the paper because of the articles criticising Russia and Italy, both allies of Britain, for their actions in Persia and Tripoli. Ali remarked:

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<sup>107</sup> N.M.M.L.: *Comrade* 20<sup>th</sup> September 1913

<sup>108</sup> N.M.M.L.: *Comrade* 7<sup>th</sup> February 1912

<sup>109</sup> Ibid

<sup>110</sup> N.M.M.L.: *Comrade* 23 March 1912

<sup>111</sup> Ibid



What had the Press Act to do with the war in Tripoli or Russian action in Persia? Are we subjects of His Majesty King George V, Emperor of India, or of King Victor Emmanuel and of the Tsar of All the Russias? [...] This District Magistrate has strangely enough specified no passage of the paper which can even remotely come under the provisions of the Press Act, and this seems to confirm the suspicion that he has based the charge on grounds possibly only hinted at by others. But the term 'objectionable' is too vague. What we want to know is the nature of the objection. There are many things which are perfectly legal yet otherwise objectionable, and one of these may be vulgar abuse of Italy or Russia. As for want of moderation, the charge is not clear. Moderation in what? In the absence of a more clear and precise accusation, it seems to be just possible that the Magistrate had mixed up his duties as a Magistrate who has to deal with crime with those of a literary critic who has to judge of tone and taste. In all conscience, the Press Laws and the Penal Code are wide enough for any Magistrate who has time on his hand and a desire to use authority.<sup>112</sup>

By publishing letters from people like Zafar Ali Khan and commenting on the legislation against the *Zamindar* press, Mohamed Ali had not only created an important space for the exchange of discourses about issues that affected Muslims but he had also created a network of support for his fellow Muslim editors. Moreover, by including Zafar Ali Khan's news about English criticism of the press laws in India and the English newspapers' support for Muslim editors, Mohamed Ali was conveying to the public and to the state that there was an international network of sympathy and support for the Muslim press. Ali accused the state of misusing its authority with respect to the Indian press and the Press Act and he directly challenged the state's interpretations of

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid

‘objectionable’ discourses. As I emphasised in the previous chapter, censored speech and the state’s discursive practices became sites of contestation that pervaded and led to the growth of public spheres in India. Ali was incensed that the *Zamindar* had been punished for criticising Russia and Italy because he saw it as imperative that the public’s and the state’s attention remain on the plight of Muslims in India and beyond and that is what he was using his own newspaper to do. However, Mohamed Ali’s participation in and constructions of public spaces in this way conflicted with the colonial state’s ambitions for public spaces of discourse and its interpretations of the discourses circulating within them.

On 14<sup>th</sup> June 1913, Ali published another article written by Zafar Ali Khan entitled “Indian Mussalmans and Pan-Islamism” in which Khan stated that ‘the bombardment of Meshed by the Russians, the descent of Italy on Tripoli, the onslaught of the Balkan Allies on Turkey, with all their attendant horrors, have made the Moslems of India a changed people’.<sup>113</sup> On Pan-Islamism, he explained:

Divested of the mischievous conception in which Western Machiavellianism had clothed it and used it as a convenient mode of expression Pan-Islamism is not a new force, but is as old as Islam itself [...] The brotherhood of Islam, or Pan-Islamism if you will, transcends all considerations of race and colour and is of an extra-territorial type in which all the Moslem populations of the world merge their geographical identity and become one nation.<sup>114</sup>

By endorsing this definition of Pan-Islamism in the *Comrade*, Mohamed Ali affirmed that he saw it as his duty to construct meaningful connections between Muslims globally. He was dedicated, not only to informing the public and the state about events

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<sup>113</sup> N.M.M.L.: *Comrade* 14<sup>th</sup> June 1913

<sup>114</sup> Ibid

and concerns that involved Muslims, but also to creating a community of concern and support for Muslims in India and beyond. This geography of concern and support was supported through print media like newspapers. These print media shaped relations, not only between Muslims within India and beyond, but also between different Indian groups and between Indians and the colonial state. Ali wrote several articles in response to European attacks and invasions of Muslim countries in the Ottoman region and in Africa often quoting several European newspapers, including the *Times* from London, the *Matin* and the *Echo de Paris* from France and the *Cologne Gazette* from Germany, among others. In a piece entitled “Great Britain and the Moslem Kingdoms”, Ali said:

[The Mussalman’s] heart throbs in unison with the Moor of Fez who sees his country passing into alien hands, with the Persian of Teheran who feels the grip of the Russian Cossack on his throat, and with the Turk of Stamboul who has to watch an act of shameless brigandage with impotent rage. But he need abandon no jot of his fervour simply because he owes allegiance to a European and a Christian sovereign whose rule is a blessing that Providence has vouchsafed to him in order to work out his material and moral salvation [...however...] we can confidently say that the same spirit of loyalty and devotion actuates the Indian Mussalmans to-day [*sic*], and, in fact, they understand better to-day than they did in 1897 that the future destiny of their community is bound up with the maintenance of an increasingly powerful and popular British administration.<sup>115</sup>

In this article, Mohamed Ali had made passionate expressions of solidarity with Muslims in Africa and Persia. He earnestly described the collective sympathy and concern that Muslims felt for each others’ suffering. By making statements like ‘[The Mussalman’s] heart throbs in unison with the Moor of Fez [...] with the Turk of

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<sup>115</sup> N.M.M.L.: *Comrade* 14<sup>th</sup> October 1911



Stamboul' he constructed a geography of Muslim unity and compassion. It was in this way that the *Comrade* was instrumental in creating relationships and connections between Muslims in different colonial spaces. However, Ali was also continually negotiating his loyalties and his identity. In this article, he stated that a Muslim 'need abandon no jot of his fervour simply because he owes allegiance to a European and Christian sovereign whose rule is a blessing' while later claiming that 'we can confidently say that the same spirit of loyalty and devotion actuates the Indian Mussalmans to-day', referring to the British state. Ali used the space of his newspaper to articulate and reconcile the different and sometimes conflicting aspects of his identity and his loyalties.

It was Mohamed Ali's persistent efforts to criticise European attacks on Muslim populations that most concerned the colonial state. In early 1913 both the *Comrade* and the *Hamdard* had attached supplements called "Macedonian Atrocities", which condemned the Balkan invasion of Ottoman-occupied Macedonia, to several of their issues in May and June 1913. These were reproduced from a pamphlet called "Come over into Macedonia and help us" which Ali had received from Turkey. The pamphlet and the issues of the *Comrade* and *Hamdard* reproducing it were proscribed by the Government of India under Section 153A of the Indian Penal Code, which had to do with the promotion of disaffection among different classes of British subjects because 'every page of the pamphlet draws an antithesis between Mussalmans and Christians'<sup>116</sup> because of passages like the following:

Perish scores of thousands of innocent Mussalmans; let thousands of women be violated rather than that Europe should stultify her policy by an action admitting that

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<sup>116</sup> N.M.M.L.: *Comrade* 6<sup>th</sup> September 1913

her protégés, these liberators, civilisers and Crusaders were a horde of bloodthirsty and licentious savages, worthy descendants of their ancestors the HUNS.<sup>117</sup>

Ali insisted that the reference was not to the Christian crusades, but rather to the crusades ‘proclaimed by the King of Bulgaria’.<sup>118</sup> He claimed that the pamphlet was ‘an appeal to Christians and in particular to Englishmen’ to save Macedonia from the ‘atrocities’ of the Balkan allies (Ali, *ibid*: 90). In August 1913, the *Comrade* was called on to deposit a security of two thousand rupees, which it had been exempted from when it had first opened (Singh, *ibid*: 226). Ali appealed against the state’s legislation and he described the proceedings of the appeal in the *Comrade*. During the appeal he claimed that the pamphlet had been endorsed by a member of the British government in England, Lord Lamington, who had even provided a foreword to the pamphlet, saying that ‘the Christian States attacked Turkey on the plea of introducing orderly and civilised government into Turkish territory. It is hardly a Christian method to do so by wiping out the population [...] I hope that this pamphlet may help to bring home to people in this country some idea of the horrors that have been taking place’.<sup>119</sup> Nevertheless, Ali’s appeal was dismissed.

While the state had interpreted Ali’s endorsement of the pamphlet as an incitement to disaffection between Muslims and Christians, Ali claimed that it was intended as an appeal to Christians. He had even tried to use an English member of parliament’s endorsement of the pamphlet in his favour; however, this had not worked. The colonial state and Ali were trying to mobilize and fix certain meanings and representations in the public sphere. They were attaching their own cultural and political values to the landscape of public discourse and when they conflicted, as they did in this instance, the

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<sup>117</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid*

state's interpretations were declared to be the decisive ones. In spite of this, Ali continued his public campaign to support Muslim nations and populations.

On 26<sup>th</sup> September 1914 Ali wrote an article entitled "The Choice of Turks".<sup>120</sup> The First World War had started with Austria-Hungary declaring war on Serbia, shortly followed by Germany's declaration of war on Russia and France in August 1914. Austria-Hungary and Germany were allies who came to be known as the Central Powers. Britain entered the War, as part of the Triple Entente with Russia and France, after Germany's invasion of Belgium in early August. Turkey had entered the Ottoman-German Alliance in August 1914 and was on the verge of going to War with Britain when Ali published the article. Turkey would eventually join the Central Powers in the War in October 1914. Ali had written this piece in response to two articles which had appeared in the *Times* newspaper in England concerning Italy's and Turkey's role in the First World War.<sup>121</sup> Ali accused the *Times* of siding with the Italians' decision to stay neutral and of criticising Turkey and urging her to join the Germans. Ali expressed concern that the *Times* was an influential newspaper that may be mistaken for an 'official oracle' and he claimed that the London correspondent of a Lucknow newspaper had even said that the *Times* 'represented the views of the Foreign Office'.<sup>122</sup> Ali called on England to 'at least officially repudiate the threats recklessly flung by the *Times* at the Turks, and in fact at the entire Moslem world'.<sup>123</sup>

Ali began the article by providing a brief history of Turkey's relations with various European and Asian powers, including Greece, Russia, and France and blamed Russia,

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<sup>120</sup> N.M.M.L.: *Comrade* 26<sup>th</sup> September 1914

<sup>121</sup> When hostilities first broke out during the First World War, Italy chose to stay out of the War, in spite of the fact that she was part of the Triple Alliance with Austria-Hungary and Germany. This is because Italy had also entered into a secret pact with France. Italy would eventually enter the War in 1915, on the side of the Triple Entente.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid

<sup>123</sup> Ibid



Britain's ally, for instigating 'every revolt against Turkey in Europe and Asia Minor'.<sup>124</sup> Ali then launched into a discussion of England's occupation of Egypt.<sup>125</sup> While stopping short of outright criticism of the occupation, Ali cited a number of British statesmen, including Gladstone and Salisbury who had pledged that the occupation of Egypt was only temporary. He stated, 'if we are asked whether the Turks or the Egyptians would have a moral justification in urging on the British the evacuation of Egypt our reply must unequivocally be that in view of the following clear and emphatic pledges of British statesmen we cannot consider such a request unjustifiable'.<sup>126</sup>

Ali continued by drawing a comparison between England's occupation of Egypt and Germany's invasion of Belgium, saying that 'Germany's greatest offence, or at least one that has impelled England to intervene against her, is that she has broken into an unoffending poor neighbour's house in order to jump into her enemy's house.' (516) Ali then asked the readers to suppose that 'Germany had entered Belgium, not to invade France, but to protect the King of Belgium and the people and had assured the Belgians that the occupation was only temporary, would the Belgian King and people be unreasonable in requesting the Germans to leave?'.<sup>127</sup>

However, Ali also urged Egypt and Turkey to give England a chance to fulfil her promises because:

England had gone to war with the noblest sentiments on the lips of her statesmen [...and if...] England emerges out of this supreme trial [...] a stronger and a still more beneficent Power, then the Turks and the Egyptians just as much as the Irish

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid

<sup>125</sup> England attacked Egypt in 1882 and occupied it until 1956, formally declaring a protectorate over it in 1914.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid

<sup>127</sup> Ibid

and Indians will pin her down to her promises even if she showed the least disposition to wriggle out of them'.<sup>128</sup>

Ali then cautioned Turkey from entering the War saying that she 'must [...] proclaim a moratorium against her warlike instincts and her clamant revenge' and if she did enter then 'let her make sure that the quarrel is her own'.<sup>129</sup> However:

if by some evil chance, [Turkey engaged] in hostilities against our own Government, we shall ask them to pray for us also, for they can hardly imagine the mental anguish and the heart-pangs that will be ours. We shall be torn between two passions, or rather the same passion will be warring with itself within'.<sup>130</sup>

Commenting further on Germany, Ali said:

We cannot withhold our admiration from the German nation that is facing the odds against itself with such courage and determination and we sometimes find it hard to repress the expression of disgust against the campaign of vilification that is being carried on with greater vigour and persistence than is deserved by German actions, harsh and ruthless though they undoubtedly are [...and...] had the country not been demoralised by the constant condemnation of unpalatable truths and the repeated rewarding of cheap lies, everyone in India would be confessing such admiration and sympathy openly [for Germany]. But admiration and sympathy are one thing, making the cause of Germany our own is another. If any cause be ours it is the British, and if Germany counts on us she is grievously mistaken. It would be bad business for Turkey also to lavish on Germany the lives and energies and resources

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid

<sup>129</sup> Ibid

<sup>130</sup> Ibid

that she needs for her own quarrels and that Germany never spared for her when she was beset by still greater perils.<sup>131</sup>

He ended the article by saying that ‘the truest test of conscience and of courage for England is not so much to declare war on Germany for a breach of Belgium’s treaty rights as to evacuate Egypt of her own free will even before a diplomatic demand is formulated by Turkey or Egypt. Nothing would shame Germany so well as this act of clear justice’.<sup>132</sup>

“The Choice of Turks” was a multi-layered article that embodied the complex range of Mohamed Ali’s sentiments, intentions and loyalties. Ali had been angered by the criticism of Turkey and ‘the entire Moslem world’ in the *Times*, affirming that he was partial to the Muslim nation and towards his Muslim brethren. At a later point in the article, however, he warned Turkey that, if she entered the War, then ‘the quarrel is her own’ and if Turkey went to war with Britain, then it would be a most difficult test of the Muslims’ loyalties and passions. Ali had previously stated that he did not see a conflict between being a British subject and supporting a brotherhood of Islam however, Turkey’s potential war with Britain presented Ali with a dilemma. In this case, his Pan-Islamic agenda sat uncomfortably alongside his loyalty to the British state. Ali dedicated a substantial part of the article to discussing England’s occupation of Egypt. He urged England to evacuate Egypt and made a cunning analogy of Germany’s invasion of Belgium with England’s occupation of Egypt. Ali expressed admiration and sympathy for Germany; however, he declared that admiration and sympathy were not the same as making the German cause their own. This was a very complex piece in which it can be said that Ali contradicted himself; however I would argue, rather, that he had been deliberative, contemplative and even provocative, for instance, when

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<sup>131</sup> Ibid

<sup>132</sup> Ibid



challenging England to set an example by evacuating Egypt. Ali did criticise England's occupation of Egypt, however he was asserting his right, as a colonial citizen, to advise the state in any matters affecting the British Empire. Ali's 'advice' was, however, interpreted as seditious by the colonial authorities.

Upon reviewing the article, a colonial official exclaimed that he did 'not see how anyone can read the article except as a direct incitement to Turkey to go to war [...] England is practically threatened if she does not evacuate Egypt, and Germany is extolled. If this is not attacking our Allies and siding with our enemies it is difficult to know what is?' (Ali, *ibid*: 92). Ali insisted that he was urging Muslims in India to support the government and his article was actually intended to urge the Khailfa to stay out of the War and 'save his Muslim countrymen from a conflict of loyalties' (*ibid*: 23). Ali had not threatened England; rather, he had challenged the English to set an example to Germany by evacuating Egypt. He had not extolled Germany at the expense of loyalty to England; rather, he had cautioned Turkey from allying herself with Germany. In November 1914, the securities of the *Comrade* and *Hamdard* Press were confiscated for the article and Ali was ordered to tender a considerably increased security deposit of ten thousand rupees. Ali shut down the *Comrade* rather than risk losing the ten thousand rupees deposit and the printing press, which was worth fifty thousand rupees (*ibid*: 93). The *Hamdard* was registered under another printer a few months later.

In addition to his newspapers Ali had set up two organisations in order to galvanise support for Muslims and Muslim causes. He established The Red Crescent Mission in Delhi, which took a group of Muslim doctors and assistants to Turkey in December 1912 (Basu, *ibid*: 116). In May 1913, he set up the Anjuman-i-Khuddam-i-Kaaba (The Servants of the K'aba) with its headquarters in Lucknow and local branches throughout the Northern provinces, including Delhi. It was set up for the purpose of 'preserving the

sanctity of the K'aba and other Holy Places of Islam from violation'.<sup>133</sup> The society described itself as a purely religious society which was not at all concerned with politics. The Delhi branch of the Anjuam-i-Khuddam-i-Kaaba started out with nine hundred members, however, by June 1914, its membership had risen to two thousand members (ibid). Mohamed and his brother Shaukat Ali were also involved in attempting to overhaul the Muslim League leadership by recruiting younger members (Minault, ibid: 48). There was a contingent of older, prosperous Muslims in Delhi with positions in the Municipality and connections to government, who were reluctant to challenge the colonial state. The Red Crescent Mission and the Anjuman helped considerably in uniting Muslim interests by fostering cooperation between some of the older Muslim leaders of Delhi and the new Muslim party (Basu, ibid: 118). Therefore, it was not only through his newspapers that Ali created networks of concern and support for and between Muslims; he organised support for Muslims through other humanitarian, religious, and political activities.

Mohamed Ali's loyalties were challenged enormously when Turkey eventually entered the First World War against Britain. Mohamed Ali further endeavoured to convince the Turks to remain neutral by sending a cable to the Ottoman interior minister in August 1914 and thereafter, he requested that the Khalifa be cabled to the same effect (Minault, ibid p. 51). A special appeal was issued by the Aga Khan, the spiritual leader of a Muslim sect known as the Ismailis, advising Muslims to remain faithful to their respective European governments. The government even took the initiative to assure India's Muslims, through a declaration by the British Prime Minister, that the involvement of Turkey did not mean an attack on Islam and that the holy places would be protected. These appeals had the desired effect on Indian Muslims in the initial stages. There were several public expressions of loyalty from Delhi's Muslims. As the

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<sup>133</sup> D.S.A.: 37/1915/H.C.

war progressed and reports of Turkish losses circulated in Delhi, the landscape of public discourse became ever more volatile. Mohamed Ali continued to publish articles on the War in his Urdu newspaper, the *Hamdard* and, as I show in the following section, Ali and his Pan-Islamic activities became the prime locus of the Delhi government's efforts to survey, vilify, manipulate and indeed prevent the construction of public opinion in Delhi.

#### **7.4 Pan-Islamism in Delhi**

Following the outbreak of the First World War, the Government of India decided that it would be necessary to procure fortnightly reports of the local situation in most provinces of India, including Delhi, focusing primarily on any events having political significance. There was a particular emphasis on public opinion in response to British involvement in the War, as well as summaries of commercial activities. The Chief Commissioner of Delhi was instructed to pay special attention to the more vocal political opinions as the Government had to be kept aware of those people that were a threat to the peace of the country. These reports were compiled by the Deputy Commissioner and they contained detailed accounts of the tone of articles in the vernacular press, the actions of certain individuals, the circulation and interception of seditious pamphlets and accounts of the rumours that circulated in Delhi's bazaars. In this section I examine the discursive strategies and effects of the Delhi government's interventions in the public sphere. I explore how the government interpreted the tone of public opinion and sentiment, paying special attention to Muslims, Mohamed Ali and his Pan-Islamic activities. In the first section I revisit the period immediately following the outbreak of the War, before the *Comrade* had published the "The Choice of Turks" article, in order to further explore the state's interpretations of Mohamed Ali's activities



and influence in Delhi and how it engineered to exclude him from Delhi's public spaces. I then describe the paranoid responses of the government to the rumours circulating in Delhi's bazaars about Britain's performance in the War and I describe how it proposed to manipulate them.

#### *7.4.1 Muslims public opinion*

Between August 1914 and July 1915, a significant portion of the fortnightly reports were dedicated to the tracking and reporting of Muslim and Pan-Islamic activities in response to the First World War, with a particular emphasis on Mohamed Ali's newspapers and Pan-Islamic pamphlets. In the first report on August 15, 1914, shortly after Britain's entry into the War, the Deputy Commissioner claimed that though there was a great interest and curiosity in the War, there was a general support for the success of the British and that the 'agitating section'<sup>134</sup> was quiet for the time being. The Deputy Commissioner was keen to document public expressions of loyalty and confidence in the success of Britain and the Allies in the War. He noted that public meetings were being held all over Delhi in which resolutions of loyalty were passed and prayers were offered for the success of the Allies and he claimed that, for the most part, the Muslims were keen for Turkey to stay out of the War.

It was also reported, however, that Mohamed Ali was starting a *Comrade* War bulletin in order to publish Reuters telegrams and other War news. An excitable article in the *Curzon Gazette* of Delhi, from the 8<sup>th</sup> of August, had made references to the 'Cross weltering in blood'.<sup>135</sup> The Deputy Commissioner suggested that the coming of the First World War had given an opportunity to 'the [P]an-Islamists and those under their influence to suggest that the coming welter of European blood was Heaven's revenge on

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<sup>134</sup> D.S.A.: 34/1914/H.C.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid

the West for its crimes against Islam'.<sup>136</sup> He went on to surmise that Mohamed Ali was responsible for the spread and entrenchment of Pan-Islamic influence in Delhi and that he was not only dangerous in Delhi but a prominent figure in North Indian politics. He accused Ali of taking every opportunity of joining religion and politics and claimed that he had 'an organised [clique] which follows him to the mosque where he openly insults the older Muhammadans; and he has worked up most of the young educated Muhammadans – particularly the Aligarh students – into a fixed attitude of aloofness and distrust'.<sup>137</sup> He also pointed out that Muslims in Delhi were keeping a close watch on Turkey's involvement in the war and that it was openly being said that Germany, and not England, is on Turkey's side and that England's alliance with Serbia and Russia was hostile to Islam. The Deputy Commissioner also suggested that the Muslims were the potential source of danger in Delhi and that though the danger was as yet a nascent one, if there was a proliferation of newspaper articles the likes of the one suggesting that 'the hand of God is descending on the enemies of Islam or similar lines of thought' then the responsible papers should be 'rigorously suppressed'.<sup>138</sup>

The state was very concerned with securing the support of the Indians during the First World War. In its bid to win the hearts and minds of the Indians, it was prepared to go to great lengths to police and regulate what was being said about Britain's role in the War (See Hazareesingh, 2007, for a discussion about censorship and control of the Indian press in Bombay during the First World War). Mohamed Ali's efforts to create a Pan-Islamic network of discursive support, along with the other Muslim newspapers, were often, as I have already shown, represented as inciting Muslims against Christians and the British state. Mohamed Ali constructed and communicated a diverse range of discourses and carried out religious, political and humanitarian activities, yet the state

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<sup>136</sup> Ibid

<sup>137</sup> Ibid

<sup>138</sup> Ibid

was intent on emphasising the dangerous effects of his Pan-Islamic activities and wanted to exclude them from the public sphere. The Deputy Commissioner was, however, keen to note that there were Muslims in Delhi who clashed with Mohamed Ali and even keener to document instances of Muslim loyalty and support for the British.

In November 1914, after Turkey had entered the War and after the government had begun the legislation against Mohamed Ali's press for "The Choice of Turks" article, there was alarm that Delhi was becoming a centre of Pan-Islamism, however 'the publication of the announcement of [British] intentions in regard to Mecca and Jeddah have had an excellent effect among all classes of [Muslims]'.<sup>139</sup> One British Delhi resident informed the Deputy Commissioner:

At present it appears as though Moslems are too surprised at the turn of events to feel anything more than dumb annoyance, not at England, but at Fate. At least, that is what I have gathered from their chatter to-day: one said that God was making a mistake. At the same time they are most bitter against Sir Edward Grey, who is blamed for our policy in the last Balkan War and with Persia and is held responsible for the war on account of his leanings towards Russia.<sup>140</sup>

The Deputy Commissioner added that concern on the part of Delhi's Muslims had abated following reassurances by the British and he stated that 'they appear to appreciate the facts in something approaching the right proportion'.<sup>141</sup>

More professions of loyalty to the British came when a declaration, which was signed by sixty nine members of the Muslim League, recognised that, while there was a

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid

<sup>140</sup> Ibid

<sup>141</sup> Ibid



spiritual connection between Delhi's Muslims and the Turks, their material and political responsibilities were different. The signatories claimed that 'under the British Government's benevolent sway, we have never forgotten our responsibilities, and [...] we can never forget them [...]'<sup>142</sup> The declaration noted that the British had made a pledge to protect all Muslim holy places in the course of the war with Turkey which was 'in itself a proof of the foresight and wisdom of the Government of India'.<sup>143</sup> The Deputy Commissioner pointed out that this was a significant gesture on the part of Delhi's Muslims and they were at pains to point out that this manifesto had been supported by all the chief religious leaders and by men such as Mohamed Ali, Hasan Nizami, and Dr. Ansari.

To some extent, the British were making strides in the war of hearts and minds with the Muslims in Delhi, due to their concerted efforts to convince the Muslims that the War was not a religious one. There were Muslims who recognised that the War with Turkey was not a religious one and felt 'dumb annoyance at fate' while at the same time there were those who interpreted it as a war between Christians and Muslims. The Delhi government was tracking and documenting all forms of Muslim opinion, but its attention was especially trained on Mohamed Ali who appeared to fall in and out of the good graces of the government. His efforts to show his cooperation with the British state by the statements in his newspapers and by signing the declaration were not enough. Before long the Deputy Commissioner reported that there were mischievous articles in the *Hamdard*:

instilling mistrust of [the] Allies while advocating the neutrality of Turkey [...and that the...] ordinary Mahomedan public is probably affected more by its attitude of criticism than by its advice to Turkey, and the policy of the paper is obviously to do

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<sup>142</sup> D.S.A.: 37/1914/H.C.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid

as much harm as possible while endeavouring to keep within the strict letter of the law.<sup>144</sup>

Of all the complex arguments that Ali made and the diverse issues he addressed in his newspapers, the government chose to focus on and assume the potentially harmful effects of his writings about the relations between European and Muslim countries. However, while the *Hamdard* was confining itself to suggestion, the *Al-Hilal* of Calcutta was indulging in 'the most flagrant and unrestrained attacks on British policy and good faith',<sup>145</sup> and was shut down because it had 'openly outstepped the bounds of decency'.<sup>146</sup> There was also concern that another Urdu newspaper, the *Siraj-ul-Akhbar* from Kabul, carried 'disturbing'<sup>147</sup> articles which may find their way into Delhi. The state repeatedly described Muslim public opinion as either for the colonial state or against it, as either favourable or unfavourable. When people like Mohamed Ali constructed thoughtful and complex political narratives in the public sphere that the state admitted were 'within the strict letter of the law', it chose to represent them as harmful and dangerous. Pan-Islamism was not seen as a positive effort to construct a community of support and concern for Muslims; it was always described negatively in the fortnightly reports as a phenomenon that threatened to undermine the British state.

The *Comrade* and the *Hamdard* press closed down in November 1914 following the confiscation of the security deposit and the demand for a prohibitively higher new deposit of ten thousand rupees. Ali decided to revive the *Hamdard* in January 1915 at a new printing press because new newspapers were subject to a lower starting security of two thousand rupees, an amount that he was able to raise from public well-wishers. Later that month, the Deputy Commissioner reported that Ali had handed a lithographed

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid

<sup>145</sup> D.S.A.: 34/1914/H.C.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid

<sup>147</sup> Ibid

Urdu leaflet to the government which he had received by post and which was already in circulation in Delhi. The authors of the leaflet claimed that the present War was indeed a religious one and that Delhi's Muslims were being misled by 'sycophants and hired ponies among us [...] who assembled at a certain place to deliver their speeches saying that it was not a religious war'.<sup>148</sup> The leaflet blamed the British for causing divisions between the Hindus and Muslims and claimed that the Lord Hardinge had reneged on his vow to spare Muslim holy places because two English newspapers had reported that holy sites near Mecca and Jerusalem had been bombed.

In spite of Ali's continued efforts to cooperate with the government, the Deputy Commissioner accused his paper, the *Hamdard*, of continuing to aid Pan-Islamists by persistently printing news that would either discredit Russia or arouse sympathy for Turkey. He claimed that the Pan-Islamists and the Khuddam-i-Kaaba party (the group established by Mohamed Ali for the preservation of Muslim holy places) were beginning to regain courage and that it wouldn't be long before they committed themselves to a 'flagrant pro-Turkey policy'.<sup>149</sup> Moreover, 'there was no question as to the cumulative effect of this programme of suggestion and criticism [...and...] until the Press Act is supplemented by legislation suitable to the present situation, it appears impossible to cope with a campaign of this nature'.<sup>150</sup> The *Hamdard* had also taken to reproducing several articles from the Kabul paper, the *Siraj-ul-Akhbar*, which had strongly condemned the attack by the Allies on Turkey and proclaimed that the War was now an Islamic cause. Another Press Act was passed in 1915 and as a result, according to the Deputy Commissioner, the *Hamdard* was temporarily more restrained.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> D.S.A.: 41/1915/H.C.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid

<sup>150</sup> Ibid

<sup>151</sup> Ibid



In addition to the Muslim newspapers, the Delhi authorities continued to intercept a number of pamphlets, most of which were described as Pan-Islamic, that both originated in and came into Delhi from various places. Some leaflets had been brought into Delhi from Muslim pilgrims returning from Mecca in which it was suggested that a *Jehad* or holy war had been declared. Several handwritten 'seditious notices of a threatening nature'<sup>152</sup> were found on the wall of the Criminal Investigation Department, on the gates of the Queens Gardens and one Urdu manuscript compiled from articles in the *Times* and the *Daily Mail* was found pasted on the Clock Tower in the Chandni Chowk. One of these notices contained 'anti-British items of news [...and reports of...] grave defeats of the Russians in the Caucasus and the annihilation of the Russian army at Tabriz'.<sup>153</sup> A leaflet called *Ana Leila* which was reported to have been written by a Pan-Islamic journalist and was found in several mosques, while not as 'mischievous' as the *Liberty* leaflets that had circulated during the Bengal partition agitation, made an appeal to 'Mohammadan instincts [rather] than to revolutionary passion pure and simple',<sup>154</sup> however it ended by invoking the Muslims to expel from India 'the cruel, selfish, faithless, tyrants, and European dacoits'.<sup>155</sup> Another Urdu notice was found in the Moti Bazaar in February 1915. It was called *786 (Bismilla)* and bore the caption "India is Sinking" and it was a call for Hindus and Muslims to unite against the British.

In May 1915, Mohamed Ali and his brother Shaukat were ordered by the state to remain outside the city of Delhi, in the Mehrauli district, and to refrain from attending public political meetings. In June 1915, the internment of the Ali brothers in Mehrauli was causing an agitation in Delhi and two public meetings were held in which widespread objection to their internment was expressed. The Ali brothers received a steady stream of visitors and support in Mehrauli. Mohamed Ali had gained a 'predominant position

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<sup>152</sup> Ibid

<sup>153</sup> Ibid

<sup>154</sup> Ibid

<sup>155</sup> Ibid

among a certain class of Muhammadans, and that class will not accept the internment without a good deal of protest'.<sup>156</sup> While the *Hamdard* attempted to rouse support for Ali, the Deputy Commissioner reported that other Muslim papers, though fairly low in circulation, had attacked him. In June 1915, the Government of India was considering more serious action against the Ali brothers by 'their removal to the hills and the restriction of their liberty in matters of publication'.<sup>157</sup> The following month, orders were issued preventing the Ali brothers and the *Hamdard* press from circulating anything that had not been pre-censored. They were finally exiled to Chhindwara in the United Provinces in order to distance them from 'centres of Muhammadan feeling' (Ali, *ibid*: 21). It was during his internment that Mohamed Ali became profoundly religious and more explicit in his criticism of the government's repressive measures.

There is little doubt that the state believed that the spread of Pan-Islamic sentiment through the Muslim press was an insidious phenomenon that had to be stopped. As I have described, some of the initiatives by Mohamed Ali to create connections between Muslims in India and Muslims in Turkey, Egypt and Macedonia through his newspapers and his humanitarian and religious missions came to be interpreted by the state as dangerous. In spite of repeated efforts by Ali to articulate and express his support for the British state in many ways, his criticism of Britain's allies and his continuing support for Turkey in the *Hamdard* were what the government chose to focus on. Muslims in Delhi could either be for or against the British. Attempts by Ali to thoughtfully and intelligently reconcile his attachment to Islam and his Muslim brethren with his loyalty to the colonial state did not work in his favour. Moreover, while Pan-Islamism was proposed by Mohamed Ali as the duty of all Muslims, it was often interpreted by the British as a negative and threatening phenomenon for which Ali was primarily responsible in Delhi. Multiple and multilayered Muslim discourses pervaded

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<sup>156</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid*

the public sphere and circulated in Delhi's public spaces during the early years of the First World War and the state was intent on ensuring that only those that were loyal to the state should be allowed.

#### *7.4.2 Wild rumours and 'correct' news*

In the process of surveying and interpreting Indian public opinion, the British periodically convulsed into information panics, which were prompted by reports of rumours that they received from Delhi's bazaars. The state kept a watchful eye over the news circulating in the bazaars as well as the commercial activities taking place there. According to the fortnightly reports the Hindus, particularly the Marwaris, were most concerned about the state of the economy because trade and commerce had stagnated as a result of the War and prices of food and other staple products were continuously rising. There was apparently widespread concern among the Hindus for the safety of the trade routes and they manifested their anxiety by making runs on the savings banks. The Deputy Commissioner claimed that the Hindus demonstrated attitudes of 'apprehension and timidity.'<sup>158</sup> Moreover, they had never had the same 'political cohesion [as the Muslims and] what they have thought has never counted much in the Punjab or elsewhere'.<sup>159</sup> The Deputy Commissioner surmised that, during the early stages of the War, the educated and wealthy Hindus were not displeased with British involvement in the War and that they had been showing distrust towards the attitude of the Muslims for some time. The state was constructing stereotypes about Hindus as timid and ineffective, unlike the Muslims who were bold and dangerous. As I have shown throughout this thesis, identity assumptions and stereotyping of Indians were favoured discursive strategies of the colonial state in the process of constructing colonial public

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<sup>158</sup> D.S.A.: 34/1914/H.C.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid



spaces. The Hindus were a concern, however, because of the anxiety that they manifested as a result of the sensationalist rumours circulating in the bazaars; anxiety that was a threat to business as usual. The Deputy Commissioner reported that ‘fantastic and alarmist rumours’<sup>160</sup> were being freely circulated and that while the educated classes were taking a keen interest in the war, the:

uneducated are for the most part apathetic and entirely ignorant of the forces engaged and of the stakes at issue [and that] the wildest rumours continue to be current in different parts of the country and the ignorance of editors and confusion of geographical names has largely contributed to the diffusion of many of these stories through the medium of vernacular broadsheets.<sup>161</sup>

The state was also perpetuating stereotypes about educated and uneducated Indian people; distinguishing between them and describing the uneducated as ignorant and most vulnerable to the ‘wild’ rumours. In addition to the rumours in the bazaars, the Delhi police reported that women bathing in the Jumna river had begun to sing songs about the loss of Indian lives in the war and were denouncing King George, accusing him of having ‘desecrated the faith of the Moslems and profaned the Dharam of the Hindus’.<sup>162</sup> The Deputy Commissioner asserted that that ‘type of song has literary merits above those usually sung by women on these occasions, and seems to betray the hand of a writer of some education’.<sup>163</sup>

The state was very concerned about the rumours because, not only did they lead to commercial anxiety, but also because tales about British war losses and defeats undermined the power and authority of the colonial state. In the previous chapter I

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<sup>160</sup> Ibid

<sup>161</sup> Ibid

<sup>162</sup> D.S.A: 41/1915/H.C.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid

described the state's paranoia about even the mildest political criticism leading to the most hideous crimes and in this chapter I have shown how the state maligned and panicked about Mohamed Ali's Pan-Islamic activities. When the state perceived a threat to its authority and credibility in public spaces, it often resorted to negative assumptions about the Indians' discourses and identities and it developed harsh and even desperate attempts to manipulate them or to exclude them from public spaces altogether. The state became obsessed about controlling the news circulating in Delhi's public spaces and suggested a variety of measures to manipulate public opinion in Britain's favour.

The Deputy Commissioner concluded that the rumours were due to the difficulty in obtaining current news. Even though news was available from the vernacular newspapers, the news was often over a week old and anyway 'no one quite believes now what he sees in an Indian paper'.<sup>164</sup> He regretted that the 'Government has not arranged to supply news to the public, which would be accepted as coming from an authoritative source'<sup>165</sup> and suggested publishing translations of Reuters wires in order to prevent the spread of widespread panic. The Reuters News Agency was the main supplier of news to the British Empire and had a close relationship with the Government of India (Hazareesingh, *ibid*: 81-84). The continued runs on the savings banks led the Deputy Commissioner to claim that a more careful censorship of the papers, one that was 'cognizant not only of military but civil requirements [...] would have prevented this. (Such a censorship would also perhaps have kept out from the "Pioneer" the suggestion - very insulting to Indians - that Japanese troops might hold India for us if necessary)'.<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> D.S.A.: 34/1914/H.C.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid*

In January 1915, the Government of India informed the Delhi government that it had become very concerned indeed at the continued 'prevalence of wild and distorted rumours which have a tendency to unsettle the public mind'<sup>167</sup> and embarrass the Government and undermine the public's confidence in its stability. The less innocuous rumours 'represent the kind of tales which in any time of crisis and stress are apt to pervade an Oriental bazaar, and which so long as the country contains so large a number of ignorant and credulous persons will never be completely dispelled'.<sup>168</sup> In order to deal with them it was suggested that press notes should be issued as had been done with noticeably good results in the United Provinces. Other suggestions included the circulation of telegrams from the Secretary of State for India and the distribution of the War newspaper, the *Fauji Akhbar* which contained 'reliable information on the course of the War'.<sup>169</sup> The Government of India also recommended public lectures which had the added advantage of being more interactive; however, these lectures had to be delivered by people who had influence with and were trusted by the people of Delhi. 'If lecturers are selected with care and their explanations are not above the heads of their audiences, the scheme offers prospects of useful instruction'.<sup>170</sup> It was further advised that teachers in colleges and schools should also be recruited to disseminate reliable news about the War.

According to the Government's claims, Indians were not capable of disseminating reliable news; moreover, they were ignorant and easily misled by the alarmist rumours created by mischief mongers. The only credible source of news was the government. The Deputy Commissioner of Delhi claimed that vernacular newspapers were ineffective and no one believed what was in them, yet the state was so concerned with their impact on Indian public opinion and sentiment. The state constructed the public

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<sup>167</sup> D.S.A.: 41/1915/H.C.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid

<sup>169</sup> Ibid

<sup>170</sup> Ibid



spheres, the people and the discourses in Delhi at this time in ways that made the state's interventions and manipulations inevitable. Indians were dangerous or timid, educated or ignorant and Indian discourses were unreliable and wild. The colonial state shaped its roles in public spaces on the basis of these constructions about the Indians' identities and discourses.

As the War progressed, the Deputy Commissioner reported that the Hindus and Muslims in Delhi appeared resigned to the fact that the War was going to be a long one and that the 'more ignorant are also probably beginning to realise that the War is not being waged on the borders of India'.<sup>171</sup> As far as the Pan-Islamists were concerned, the Delhi government claimed that there was a temporary cessation of dangerous Pan-Islamic activity in Delhi after the expulsion of the Ali brothers. While the Muslims in Delhi continued to be interested in the War, they became more interested in discussing the proposed meeting of the Muslim League at Bombay with the more conservative Muslims expressing concern that Muslim interests would be passed over in favour of nationalist Congress politics.<sup>172</sup>

## 7.5 Conclusions

The political landscape of India was radically altered by the proliferation of public spaces of discourse, in which people came together in order to fulfil varied and complex objectives. Mohamed Ali was one such individual who continually tried to reconcile his passion for Muslim causes and people, which he saw as his religious obligation, with his political ambitions for the Muslims and Indians as a whole. He also saw it as his right, as a colonial citizen, to advise the state in matters affecting the British Empire. In

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<sup>171</sup> Ibid

<sup>172</sup> Ibid

the *Comrade*, he created a space of reflection and communication and with it, a community of concern and a network of Pan-Islamic discourse and support. Newspapers were one of many ways in which Indians made material and discursive connections between people and spaces. Mohamed Ali employed a number of discursive strategies to articulate his ambitions and desires. He was forthright in his criticism of the extremist Hindus in Bengal, of the press laws and of the European nations' invasions of Muslim countries. He regularly reported on causes and events affecting Muslims all over the world and celebrated their successes and progress. However, Ali also favoured cooperation with the Hindus and Indian nationalism and he also continually asserted his identity as a citizen of the British Empire. It is imperative to recognise that Indians employed a variety of different strategies in order to engage with the colonial state. In Chapters Four and Five I discussed how the Saraogis involved several members of the colonial state in a series of dialogues and appealed to colonial ideologies of religious tolerance and equality, while at the same time, they criticised the bias of the state and the motives of the Hindus. In Chapter Six I showed evidence of violent anti-colonial discourses and practises as well as moderate nationalist initiatives. In this chapter I have shown how Mohamed Ali mobilised certain identity conceptions in order to suit his specific agendas. While he was a Muslim, he was also a British citizen and an Indian. While he was like moderate nationalist Indians, he was unlike the Bengali extremists. Indians were skilled at using ideas of similarity and difference to construct their rationale, as the British were. Ali was passionate, politically astute, contradictory and cunning in the way he articulated his complex ambitions and desires.

Though the objectives and discursive strategies of Mohamed Ali were complex and multiple, the Delhi government was intent on maligning them as part of a dangerous Pan-Islamic agenda that undermined the state's attempts to rouse support for the British war effort. Indians were either for the British or against the British. Even though the

Deputy Commissioner recognised that Mohamed Ali was not guilty of sedition, he feared the 'cumulative effects of suggestion and criticism' in Ali's newspapers. This echoed the state's earlier assertions about carping political innuendo being a breeding ground for more dangerous doctrines that I discussed in Chapter Six. It seems that Indians were incapable of formulating nuanced and provocative political narratives that would not eventually lead to outright opposition and explicit violence. There was a difference between the overtly anti-Christian rhetoric in some Muslim pamphlets and newspapers and the cunning analogies constructed in the *Comrade* by Mohamed Ali. Yet, their effects were interpreted as being equally objectionable and dangerous by the state. Pan-Islamic discourses and activities were not inherently anti-British or anti-Christian; however the colonial government made concerted efforts to show them as such. This universalising of the Indians' perspectives and agendas was designed to reduce complex spaces of discourse to subjects of colonial governmentality.

In addition to being dangerous, the state accused Indian newspapers of being unreliable and it feared that Delhi bazaars were full of wild rumours and false news stories which were leading ignorant Indians astray. While there were some wildly inaccurate rumours circulating in the bazaars, many of them were true. As I have shown, Indians were involved in multiple discursive networks through which they created access to international news and the myriad efforts of the government were not always able to censor what reached the Indians. The state was also concerned by Indian women singing nationalist songs while they bathed in the river. It was, therefore, left with no choice but to intervene in Delhi's public spheres and manipulate public opinion by supplying 'correct' news. The state was intent on preventing Indians from formulating their own political understandings in public forums, especially when they ran counter to its own agendas. It did this, as I have repeatedly pointed out, by perpetuating specific identity assumptions about Indians and their discourses. In this case, Indians were



ignorant and credulous; Muslims were dangerous whereas Hindus were timid, and Indian newspapers were either harmful or completely unreliable. In this way, the state constructed itself as the only credible source of opinion and news or as the authority in Indian public spaces. However, as I have described throughout this thesis, the state's roles in public spaces were always shaped by the roles that the Indians played within these spaces. It is only possible to appreciate the complexity involved in the creation and workings of colonial public spaces, from the newspapers to the bazaars, when we engage with the discursive strategies of the different people who were involved in them through a dynamic series of relationships.

### **8.1 Introduction**

Public spaces were crucial for the British and the Indians in different and often conflicting ways. The differences in the priorities of the colonial state and the Indians in Delhi were played out in the public arena and these priorities were informed by various determinants from local political rivalries to international events. In this thesis I explored why public spaces were important for the colonial state and the Indians and I examined how they discursively constructed these spaces and how they participated in them in order to fulfil specific cultural and political objectives.

I looked closely at encounters between the British and the Indians in the context of religious processions in public spaces and of political activities in public spheres in order to show that these spaces were constructed by multiple, complex and changing discourses and spatial practices. I analysed the construction of these spaces in their appropriate local contexts and in the light of national and even global events, like the Bengal anti-partition activity and the First World War because they are crucial to understanding the relevance and significance of the various discursive practices. In this concluding chapter I revisit and summarise the arguments that I made throughout this thesis in order to readdress the research questions:

- Why were public spaces so important in colonial Delhi?
- How did the British and the Indians construct and participate in public spaces in colonial Delhi?

- What difference does it make to analyse the discursive construction of public spaces as a series of processes in which the British *and* the Indians participated?

## 8.2 Why were public spaces so important in colonial Delhi?

The *rathjatra* provided an excellent opportunity to show why public spaces were so important for the British, the Saraogis and the Vaishnu Hindus in Delhi. The *rathjatra* was important to the Saraogis because religious displays and celebrations in public arenas were a common facet of Indian culture. The opportunity to celebrate their religion publicly had been denied to the Saraogis by the Delhi government because the Commissioner claimed that they represented a threat to public order. This was due to opposition by Vaishnu Hindus which was motivated not only by fundamental religious differences but also by business rivalries and personal differences between Saraogi and Hindu leaders. The *rathjatra* became a way for the Saraogis and the Hindus to channel their local conflicts. Therefore, public spaces were not only important for the expression of cultural aspects of identity, but they were also important mediums through which personal and political competitions were played out and where Indian elites showed off their status and wealth. The Saraogis wanted to use Delhi's public spaces in order to show that they were an integral part of the city and of the public landscape.

For the colonial state, order in public spaces was the main priority. In the case of the *rathjatra*, the Commissioner claimed that the principal reason that the Saraogis *rathjatra* was disallowed was because of the threat that it posed to public peace and to public order. Although there were members of the colonial state who recognised the significance of public spaces for the religious practices of the Saraogis, the dominant colonial discourse was informed by a concern for public order. Therefore, public spaces



were a crucial aspect of colonial governmentality; they were sites upon which the state exercised its authority and shaped itself.

I showed that public spaces were also crucial for the expression and communication of the growing political ambitions of Indians, from nationalist activities like opposition to the partition of Bengal to extremist activities like the Delhi Bomb and the pamphlets hailing the use of violence as an effective political strategy. Print culture was responsible for the growth of these public spaces of discourse. Newspapers and pamphlets were spaces where Indians constructed and communicated their diverse political discourses which included, but were not reduced to, their opposition to the colonial state. Public meetings were also sites which served as mediums of nationalist and extremist political activities. Public spaces such as libraries, bookshops, classrooms and railways stations became political spaces when people gathered there to hold meetings and to disseminate political literature.

Similarly, the newspaper *Comrade* was an important space for several reasons: it was a space of comment and analysis, it was a medium of communication with the colonial state, and it was also a way to promote a Pan-Islamic agenda and to create links between Muslims in different spaces. Indians used public spaces of discourse such as newspapers to create connections between people in local, national and global spaces. During the Bengal anti-partition activities, political pamphlets came into Delhi from Calcutta, Punjab, London and California; these pamphlets fostered links between activists in these diverse spaces. When executed activists from Bengal were commemorated with public displays of mourning and protest in Delhi, these displays declared solidarity with or connections between people in different national spaces. Public spaces of discourse were crucial for the growth of public spheres in India and for the exchange of ideas, rumours, propaganda and materials between people in distant spaces.

The colonial state intervened strongly in the public spheres in India after the late nineteenth century. It intervened in order to interpret, censor and restrict what was being said in public spaces such as newspapers, pamphlets, public and even private meetings because it recognised how important these spaces were becoming to politically-active Indians. As the political landscapes of India and Delhi became more fluid and volatile with Indians taking an increasing interest in national and international issues and articulating their ambitions in various public spaces, the colonial state sought to subject these spaces to surveillance and control. For the state, therefore, public spaces of discourse were integral to the exercise of its authority. In Chapters Six and Seven, I showed very clearly how the colonial state reduced complex public spaces of discourse in India and in Delhi to subjects of colonial governmentality.

In sum, public spaces were the sites where Indian articulated and exercised their religious, cultural and political aspirations and identities. In public spaces, Indians conducted their competitions, expressed their opposition to the colonial state, promoted and carried out nationalist and violent activities, and constructed connections between people. For the colonial state, public spaces were important sites of governance and it was intent on preserving order within these spaces. While there were members of the colonial state who understood the religious and political significance of public spaces for Indians, colonial discourses primarily reflected a concern with public order and control, although the motivations were always complex and often a response to local circumstances. Moreover, the colonial state often had to negotiate their access to and control over public spaces or contend with Indians who employed a diverse range of practices in order to construct and participate in these spaces.

### 8.3 How did the British and the Indians construct and participate in public spaces in colonial Delhi?

In the process of making their claims to and participating in Delhi's public spaces, the British and the Indians constantly came into contact with one another. These encounters were often marked by conflicting priorities but sometimes they were also defined by processes of dialogue and negotiation, as was very clear in the case of the Saraogis' *rathjatra*. In this section I revisit the different strategies that members of the colonial state and the various Indians employed in public spaces in order to, not only emphasise how diverse the practices were, but also to remind us how they were informed by multiple considerations, from local politics to global events. It is imperative to understand the cultural and political contexts that underpinned the discursive strategies of the Indians and the British in order to appreciate the extent to which the production of public spaces was achieved through a wide range of entangled discourses and other practices.

When the Saraogis laid claim to Delhi's public spaces, they did so by employing a combination of discursive and spatial strategies. When they were making the case for their *rathjatra*, they emphasised their identity as a legitimate religious group that was denied the right to have a public religious procession; a right that the Hindus and Muslims in Delhi and Saraogis in other parts of India enjoyed. As the Saraogis' campaign intensified, they repeatedly emphasised their status as equal colonial subjects, who should benefit from the religious tolerance and equality that was offered under colonial laws. The Saraogis repetitively and persuasively asserted their claims to colonial officials at several levels of the government. The Saraogis grew bolder in their claims when they described the Hindus as jealous and vindictive and when they accused the colonial state of intolerance and bias. At times they expressed their similarity with



other colonial subjects and asserted their colonial citizenship and at other times, they stressed their differences with the Vaishnus. What I have sought to demonstrate is the Saraogis' skill at turning a local conflict into a larger issue of religious tolerance and colonial citizenship in a way that became very difficult to ignore. Indian elites were skilled at using persuasive rhetoric, mobilising certain identity assumptions and at engaging the colonial state in order to assert themselves. During the actual *rathjattras*, I showed how the Saraogis used a number of discursive, spatial and temporal strategies in order to express their religious identity, to assert their significance to the city spaces and beyond, to maximise their impact on the onlookers and participants, and to compete with the Hindus.

The Saraogis' claims to Delhi's public spaces had to negotiate and compete with the claims of the Vaishnus and the colonial state. The Commissioner of Delhi described the Saraogis as a devious and detestable group of people whose processions were an unnecessary innovation and, above all, were a threat to public order. The Commissioner mobilised negative identity assumptions about the Saraogis in order to assert his claims. He emphasised their differences in a negative way in order to prevent their participation in Delhi's public spaces. This dominant discourse gradually became eroded by the skilfully and relentlessly implemented campaign of the Saraogis and by alternative colonial discourses that supported the Saraogis' claims about religious tolerance and equal rights. The shift in the dominant discourse was achieved through a process that was defined initially by the dynamics of power and opposition but evolved into a series of exchanges involving dialogue and negotiation. Ultimately, the Saraogis became legitimate claimants and the Vaishnus were described as unreasonable and dishonest. Colonial discourses were not homogenous and all-encompassing; rather, they were varied, multi-layered and vulnerable. Moreover, they could be shifted and transformed. When I examined the exchanges between the Delhi government and the Saraogis over

the arrangements for the first *rathjatra* in 1877, it was clear that the state's preoccupations with discipline and control for the procession were not only informed by a preoccupation with its own authority, but they were also influenced by the Saraogis' own requests for protection, a concern for public convenience and out of fairness to Hindus and Muslims. When the Saraogis made additional requests for *rathjstras* in a climate of increased local tensions with the Hindus, the government expressed a much greater concern with its own authority and made the Saraogis responsible for the extra policing costs in an effort to dissuade them from having long and elaborate processions. However, even in one of these latter requests, the influence of the Saraogi leader Mehr Chand was instrumental in ensuring the Saraogis permission for their *rathjatra*. Therefore, the discursive strategies and the spatial practices employed by the colonial state to define and lay claim to Delhi's public spaces were not only informed by larger colonial ideologies about public order in public spaces; they were also very much a response to the local contexts in Delhi and the local relations between the Saraogis and Hindus. When local tensions increased, the government expressed a much greater concern for public order and for its own authority but even then, it had to contend seriously with and make allowances for resourceful and influential local elites and with customary practices.

I also explored how the state attempted to restrict the growth of public spheres by creating a number of laws in order to define sedition and to regulate the press and public meetings. The state created a very ambiguous and general definition of sedition and it created a very loose definition of a 'public' meeting which gave it the ability to make incursions into Indians' private spaces. When events took a violent turn, this propelled the state into a state of paranoia over the dangers of public opinion and led to the creation of a more stringent press act. The state warned that even minor criticisms should be discouraged because they were the breeding ground for more insidious

actions. The state created a role for itself in which it had the authority to interpret sedition and to intervene in public and private spaces of discourse. Very simply, it could control what was being said and where it was being said. This was justified, claimed a member of the state, in light of the especially volatile situation that prevailed following the creation of the Indian National Congress, the spread of the *Swadeshi* movement and the Bengal anti-partition activity. The Indian situation was different and Indians were different, and so the state was justified in creating special measures to prevent sedition and control the press.

Although the state attempted to reduce Delhi's public spheres to objects of colonial governmentality, it was faced with a series of different initiatives by the Indians to participate in the public spheres and to create new public spaces of discourse. As I described in Chapters Six and Seven, newspapers, pamphlets, public meetings, protests and displays were used to construct and communicate the diverse political aims of Indians in Delhi. In Chapter Six I described how Indians negotiated the press laws by using dummy editors when Raza, the editor of the *Aftab*, was prosecuted and when it was finally shut down, another newspaper was created to fill the void. The activists in Delhi also negotiated the Seditious Meetings Act by holding public meetings on the outskirts of the province of Delhi so that they could not come under the jurisdiction of the Act. Pamphlets were especially popular as a way of circulating political propaganda and they could not always be intercepted in time by the forces of government. The violent activists also used public mediums in which to promote their own explicitly anti-colonial agenda through the print media and through spatial acts like the Delhi bomb. These extremists distinguished themselves from the moderate activists like Lajpat Rai who they described as ineffective and cowardly, although he had been prosecuted by the colonial state for his political activities. Muslims that opposed the Bengali activists issued public declarations of support for the colonial state and criticism of the violent



activists. There were multiple, heterogeneous public spheres which were important mediums through which different Indian groups conducted their competitions through a range of discursive strategies.

I also discussed how Mohamed Ali used a number of discursive strategies in the public space of his newspaper in order to negotiate the various aspects of his identity and to promote Pan-Islamism. While he expressed a passion for Muslim causes and showed a commitment to reporting and commenting on all sorts of events that affected Muslims, he also favoured Indian nationalism and often referred to himself as a colonial subject and professed the need to be loyal to the colonial state. He even claimed that his loyalties would be 'torn' if Turkey entered the First World War against Britain. However, there was only one aspect of Ali's discursive activities, his Pan-Islamic agenda, that the state was intent on emphasising and misinterpreting. Immediately prior to and during the early years of the First World War, the state expressed a grave concern with Muslim public opinion and intervened strongly in Delhi's public spheres. When Mohamed Ali promoted a Pan-Islamic agenda in his newspaper, the Delhi government described these initiatives as anti-colonial and anti-Christian and ultimately exiled him in order to prevent him from influencing public opinion in Delhi. The government resorted to negative identity constructions about Muslims and Muslim public opinion. In contrast, Hindus were 'timid' and 'lacked cohesion'. Even though Mohamed Ali stayed within the strict letter of the law, the state warned of the 'cumulative effects of suggestion and criticism'. By repeatedly emphasising the harmful effects of words and language and by using its own discretion to restrict what it defined as dangerous (even when it was legal), the state sought to control the growth of public spheres in India.

I revisited the different discursive and spatial strategies employed by the British and the Indians in order to show how complex the construction of public spaces was and how

many different concerns motivated the people involved. The state perpetuated negative identity claims about Indians, it emphasised the harmful effects of their words, homogenised their diverse political discourses and created laws that endorsed its interference in the wide range of Indian public arenas. Although there were alternative British viewpoints that understood the cultural and political ambitions of the Indians, as I showed in the Saraogis case, during times of increased political volatility, the state manifested an overwhelming concern with asserting its authority and controlling public spaces in India. The emphasising of Indians' differences was a useful tactic. The state's discursive strategies were always adapting to the changing social and political contexts which were defined by the cultural and political activities of the Indians. The state encountered a range of initiatives created by the Indians to define, construct and participate in public spaces. Indians too employed a range of discursive and spatial strategies including religious processions, public displays of solidarity and protest and the distribution of pamphlets in public spaces. They too defined each other and the colonial state in positive and negative ways, asserting their similarities and emphasising their differences when it suited them. Public spaces were used for a wide range of activities from the cultural, to the moderately political to the violently anti-colonial and they were influenced by local, national and global processes, for the British and for the Indians.

#### **8.4 What difference does it make to analyse the discursive construction of public spaces as a series of processes in which the British *and* the Indians participated?**

Public spaces were an integral part of the cultural and political landscapes of colonial societies. I described how different people, discourses and practices in colonial Delhi constituted various public spaces and I showed that they were heterogeneous,

multilayered and dynamic sites of interaction. I did this because it is the most effective way to recognise and theorise the contributions of colonised peoples to the construction of their colonial spaces, histories and geographies.

I discussed how postcolonial theory made crucial investigations into the ways that colonial power operated to discursively construct the spaces and identities of colonised peoples. I also argued that it has evolved to provoke more thoughtful discussions about colonial relations by problematising colonial discourses and opening up spaces to engage with the discourses of colonised peoples. In this thesis I showed how the colonial state discursively constructed the spaces and identities of the Indians and how it perpetuated certain identity assumptions about them in order to justify its discursive and spatial practices. However, I also showed, particularly in the case of the Saraogis' *rathjattras*, that there were different colonial discourses and, moreover, that dominant narratives could be and were informed and transformed by the discourses of the Indians. I examined the discursive strategies of the colonial state that were designed to control and restrict the growth of public spaces of discourse in the early twentieth century and that were driven by negative identity constructions of Indians and ideas about Indians as different. These efforts were, however, only marginally effective in restricting or preventing the growth of public spheres in India. Indians were innovative and relentless in their initiatives to construct and participate in public spaces of discourse, for which the use of print media was especially significant. As the colonial state shaped its policies and its different roles in public spaces, it had to do so in response to the Indians who were shaping their own roles, identities and ambitions in these spaces. Therefore, it is imperative to recognise that colonial spaces were constituted by a range of discourses and spatial practices in which people at all levels of society participated through a series of complex encounters. The key concepts of postcolonial analysis can be applied to



empirical research in order to show that, while colonial discourses were sites for colonial power, they were also sites for various manifestations of Indian agency.

It has been especially enlightening to discover and engage with the range of concerns that were embodied in the discursive strategies of the Indians. Indian practices in public spaces were not just defined by anti-colonial resistance and opposition. Indians were motivated by a range of concerns, from the expression of their cultural identities, to nationalist propaganda, to support for people in other colonial spaces in India and beyond. Indians mobilised various identity assumptions; sometimes they asserted their colonial citizenship and emphasised their similarity with each other while at other times they were at pains to distinguish themselves from one another in order to fulfil specific political aims. I showed this by analysing the complex strategies and motivations of the Saraogis and Mohamed Ali. The spaces and identities of the Indians in Delhi that I have studied were informed and defined by much more than the fact that they were colonised. Hosagrahar (2005) and Yeoh (1996, 1991) both, as I described, carried out excellent research that considered the integral roles that colonised peoples played in the construction of urban public spaces. The research in this thesis contributes to colonial urban studies by considering the discursive practices of the colonial state and by showing that Indians were skilled agents who exploited a range of resources in order to construct and participate in public arenas in Delhi. My work also informs and considerably enhances conceptions of the public sphere which, as Habermas (1989) rightly showed, was very significant for social and political integration and dependant upon print culture for its development. I showed that, in colonial spaces, while public spheres were crucial sites of interaction and were radically invigorated by print technology, they were multiple and differentiated. At certain times, they were constituted by rational political discussion, such as the *Comrade* newspaper and at other times, they consisted of violent propaganda and spontaneous political demonstrations.

At all times, they were spaces within which the complex cultural and political aspirations of the colonial state and the Indians were articulated.

This thesis contributes significantly to postcolonial geographies, not only by considering the complex and multilayered construction of Delhi's public spaces but also by analysing how Indians created connections with and between people in local, national and global colonial spaces. As I discussed with reference to existing research in postcolonial geography (Ogborn, 2007, 2003, 2002, 2000; Lambert and Lester, 2006; Lester, 2003, 2001), it is very useful to study how 'people, places and events' (Lambert and Lester, *ibid*: 4) were connected through discourses and materials; however, research in this area has prioritised the analysis of British practices. I showed that colonial public spaces were defined by a range of connections and links with other spaces that were created by the Indians, not just by the British and not just by exchanges between London and Delhi. Indians created discursive links with people in a number of spaces, and positioned themselves within discursive networks that informed the way public spaces in Delhi were constructed. I analysed the local, national and global geographies of discursive practices that contributed to the construction of public spaces in colonial Delhi and I did so in order to create a more nuanced, complex and indeed more accurate understanding of how colonial public spaces functioned.

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